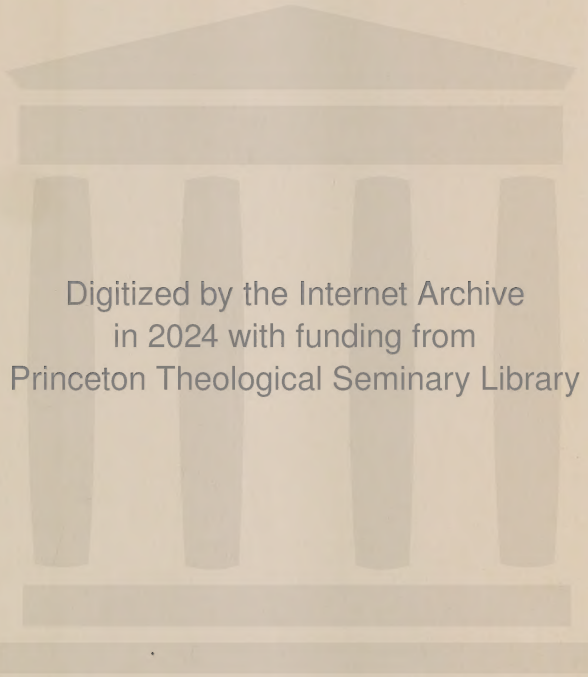




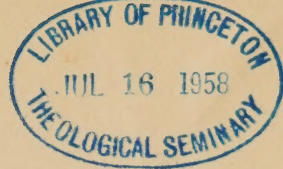
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"Amazing grace!"



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“Amazing Grace!”

✓✓
John Newton



"Amazing Grace!"

by ✓

DONALD E. DEMARAY



LIGHT AND LIFE PRESS

WINONA LAKE, INDIANA

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By

LIGHT AND LIFE PRESS

*This Little Book is Affectionately
Dedicated
to
My Wife*

Preface

"There was a man sent from God," says the Biblical writer, "whose name was John." Those words refer to John the Baptist. But seventeen centuries later there was another John—John Newton—whose life was an amazing testimony to the power of God to transform an exceedingly sinful man into a creative personality. He was a slave trader and, as he often styled himself, an "African blasphemer," who became a preacher of the Gospel. Like John of old, this John of modern times was clearly "sent from God," sent "to bear witness to the light."

In a British Museum manuscript written by the Rev. William Cole, there appears a curious statement: "At the Archdeacon's visitation at Long Stratford in 1765, appeared as Minister of Olney, one Mr. Newton, a very little odd-looking man of the Methodistical order, and without any clerical habit. He said he was Mr. Browne's curate. . . ."* One can almost see this "little odd-looking man" walking through the streets of Olney, England, a town famous for its lace-making. He wears his blue sea jacket, which he preferred over the clerical dress of the Anglican Church of which he was a minister. He goes in and out of the cottages, chatting freely with the town's folk . . . nor does he forget the children who work along with, and as hard as the adults, at lace-making, and who hold a special place in his heart. "If, as I go home,"

* Quoted in Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Cowper*, p. 159.

Newton says, "a child has dropped a halfpenny, and if, by giving it another, I can wipe away the tears, I feel I have done something. I should be glad, indeed, to do greater things; but I will not neglect this." He stops in to see Molly Coles who is under quarantine; his genial sense of humor coupled with his "ardent sensibility" make him an excellent sick room visitor. Next he calls on Molly Mole "who I hope will be a very good girl." He waves to the "Marys, Mollys, Sallys, Sarahs"—as he once expressed it—on his way home, but cannot resist stopping in to say hello to Sally and Judith Johnson. John Newton has been described as "a downright homely man," but his humility, his obvious sincerity, and especially his shepherd's heart—these are the personal qualities which have won him the hearts of Olney's people.

Arriving at the manse, the parson finds a needy citizen waiting to see him. He is one of the poor wretches which dot the countryside and make up the larger portion of Olney itself. The kind pastor listens to his story, and of course he is invited to stay for tea—the first warm drink and good food he has had in two days—and the first time he has experienced such a warm, friendly atmosphere. All gather about the table—Cowper the poet and his housekeeper, Mrs. Unwin; Mrs. Newton; the pastor who tells the stories of his seafaring days. "I was a wild beast on the coast of Africa; but the Lord caught me and tamed me. . .," John Newton begins. In seconds all are absorbed in the amazing tales which he unfolds. Half an hour goes by with no thought of time. Suddenly, the tea is finished; then a hymn is sung—one written by Newton himself—the little group separates, and one of Olney's

“poor wretches,” who in all probability suffers from tuberculosis and whose days are numbered, goes away happier and with the promise of material help very soon.

But this is getting ahead of our story . . .

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Foreword

Did you ever feel compelled to do a task? The Apostle Paul did; he cried, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." The author of this book feels the same about his task—"Woe is me if I tell not the amazing story of John Newton! For here is a man who is a real life illustration of the power of God to make a very bad man very good. He was a wicked sailor who became a powerful preacher of the gospel.

We have just celebrated the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of John Newton's death; he died December 21, 1807. But John Newton is not dead! He lives on in his influence which has gone around the world to bless mankind. Who is there who has not sung his hymns: "Amazing grace!"—that especially—"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," and many another? Few are there who will not thrill to the story of his conversion. And who will not be challenged by his pioneering efforts in modern missions? Surely there are none who will be unappreciative of the social reforms he helped bring about—freedom of the Negro slave, the education of children, awareness and alleviation of human hunger and need. To those interested in preaching, the sense of urgency that possessed Newton and commanded crowded churches, will be a challenge. The counselor will be amazed at Newton's patience and effectiveness with individuals. The youth worker will be inspired with New-

ton's accomplishments with children and young people.

So it was that I felt *compelled* to write, and the story is recorded on the following pages.

DONALD E. DEMARAY
Seattle, Washington

Amazing Grace

*Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!*

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.*

John Newton

"The People Stare at Me"

"The people stare at me since reading [my *Authentic Narrative*], and well they may." So wrote John Newton shortly after he published the story of his life. And little wonder the people were so amazed! Landing on the Plantane Islands off the coast of Africa—as his story goes—he was employed by a slave trader. Before he could give his employer much service, however, he was seized with a severe illness and treated with shocking neglect. He had sometimes great difficulty in procuring so much as a drink of cool water when "burning with fever." His bed was a mat and his pillow a log of wood. When the fever left him and his appetite returned, no one gave him food. His overseer was a black woman who lived with his master as a wife and from the first she was prejudiced against Newton. While she had plenty herself, she allowed John scarcely enough food to remain alive, except occasionally when in the "highest good-humour" she would condescend to give him food from her own plate after she had eaten. And this—so greatly was his pride humbled—he received with thanks and eagerness. Once, says Newton, "I was called to receive this bounty from her own hand, but being very weak and feeble, I dropped the plate, and she had the cruelty to laugh at my disappointment, and refused to give me any more, though the table was covered with dishes."

His distress at times was so heightened that he was compelled to go by night—even at the risk of being punished as a thief—to pull up roots, and, lest he should be

caught, to eat them raw on the spot. "I have sometimes been relieved by strangers, nay, even by the slaves in the chain, who have secretly brought me food."

But let us start at the beginning. On a summer's day—to be exact, July 24—in the year 1725, there was born into a home which was not wealthy but respectable, an only child, a son "whose name was John." His father was for many years master of a ship in the Mediterranean trade and after his retirement from the sea became governor of York Fort in Hudson's bay. John being an only child, his mother made it the chief business of her life to educate him and bring him up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eager to learn, by the time he was four he could read with facility. His mother stored his mind with portions of Scripture and at an early age he had memorized the answers to the questions in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism with the proofs, plus all of Isaac Watts' smaller Catechisms and Children's Hymns. In his sixth year he began to learn Latin. But his excellent progress in learning was not to continue for his mother died when he was seven. She had been a member of Dr. David Jennings' Congregational Church, and she had dedicated John to God for the ministry in his infancy. Had she lived he would have been sent to the University of St. Andrews in Scotland to be educated. After the death of Mrs. Newton, John's father remarried, but neither his new mother nor his father were interested in religious things and young John was given no further religious training. In fact, he was now very much neglected and

was left to run the streets, mingling with idle boys from whom he learned the ways of wickedness. This was the beginning of his life of sin.

At the age of eight, John was sent to a boarding school at Stratford in Essex where he stayed for two unhappy years. So severe was the schoolmaster that John grew exceedingly discouraged and made no academic progress; in fact he nearly forgot all his good mother had taught him. The sternness of his father coupled with the severity of his schoolmaster "overawed and broke my spirit," he wrote later of this period.

What an eventful day was John's eleventh birthday! It was an exciting day too, for Captain Newton had decided to take his son to sea with him—and that very soon. New adventure would now replace harsh school days. Not only new but extended adventure was to be John's, for by the time he was seventeen he had made six voyages. In the course of one of these journeys he was left at Alicant in Spain to work with a merchant friend of his father's. "With him I might have done well," confessed John, "but by this time my sinful propensities had gathered strength of heart: I was very wicked, and therefore very foolish." John had learned to "curse and blaspheme" before he was twelve years old.

But during these first years at sea John had his periods of piety. Once he was aroused from his complacency by an accident which nearly took his life. He had "a dangerous fall from a horse," being thrown within "inches of a hedge-row newly cut down." He was not injured, but observed that had he "fallen upon the stakes," he must have met certain death. Following this he gave up his

“profane practices,” but for a short time only. On another occasion he was brought to his senses by the sudden death of a close friend. The two had agreed to go on board a man-of-war ship; but, says Newton, “I providentially came too late; the boat was upset, and he [my friend], and several others were drowned. I was invited to the funeral of my play-fellow, and was exceedingly affected, to think that by the delay of a few minutes (which had much displeased and angered me till I saw the event) my life had been preserved.”

Even after this, however, he lapsed back into sin. Before he was sixteen years of age he had taken up and laid down a religious profession some three or four times. His last reform during this period was quite remarkable in that he attempted to live the strict life of a Pharisee as it were. Says Newton, “I spent the greatest part of every day in reading the Scriptures, and in meditation and prayer. I fasted often: I even abstained from animal food for three months. I would hardly answer a question for fear of speaking an idle word. . . . In short, I became an ascetic.” This reformation continued for more than two years, but it was not to last. He stumbled onto Lord Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*, a book that encouraged Newton to doubt the historic Christian faith. He was enamored of this book at once, and read and read the section entitled “A Rhapsody,” until he could almost say it from memory. Shaftesbury’s thoughts were to have a telling influence on his life.

"I Was Suddenly Freed"

It was almost love at first sight. John was only seventeen and Mary but fourteen years of age, but from that first meeting his love for her never abated. It all began in December of 1742 when John's father, who had just retired, made plans to establish his son in business. A Liverpool merchant, Mr. Manesty, offered to send John to Jamaica and care for his future welfare. Before John was to have sailed, however, he was sent to Kent on business and there he visited the Catletts, relations of his mother. Then it was that he met the beautiful young Mary Catlett! Almost immediately he knew he loved her. To leave Mary and go out to Jamaica for perhaps five years was now an intolerable thought. His heart dictated a change of plans: he would stay in Kent until his ship had sailed from the Port of Liverpool without him.

Upon hearing that John had prolonged his visit instead of sailing for Jamaica, his father was enraged. But time brought reconciliation and John's father sent him on a voyage to Venice. He returned in 1743 but again found himself in trouble. Owing partially to unwise behavior, he was impressed and sent on board a man-of-war, the "Harwick." The senior Newton sought without success to secure his release, but did procure for him a recommendation to the captain and John was taken on the quarter-deck as a midshipman. His closest companion on board the ship was an infidel who by some strange coincidence had studied Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, and he persuaded Newton that the teaching in this book represented

the proper attitude toward Christianity. Having accepted this new "free-thinking" philosophy, Newton believed himself at liberty to behave as he chose and therefore conducted himself in a most undisciplined manner which lost him the favor of his captain. To make matters worse, he deserted his ship while she lay at Plymouth. He was discovered by a party of soldiers, put in irons, then publicly beaten and degraded from his office.

The "Harwick" now set out for the East Indies, but at Madeira Newton requested to be transferred to another ship so that he could be "as abandoned as I pleased, without any controul." The new ship was bound for Sierra Leone, but he asked to be landed on the Plantanes—a group of islands near Sierra Leone—and was granted his request along with a discharge. . . . And this is where we came into the story at the very outset, when Newton entered the service of a slave-trader, was seized by a severe illness, treated with shocking cruelty, and allowed to go half starved.*

While Newton was suffering so cruelly at the instigation of the "black woman," his master was away. Upon returning, he took Newton with him on the subsequent journey. But again John suffered ill-fortune; he was falsely accused of unfaithfulness in service and his master, when he went ashore, chained Newton to the ship's deck. During the master's frequent and long absences, Newton was left with a meager allowance of food which he supplemented with what fish he was able to catch; but the fish he had to eat half-cooked. Often he was left exposed to

* This amazing story seems to have influenced Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." See Bernard Martin, *The Ancient Mariner and The Authentic Narrative* (1949).

the weather without sufficient clothing for twenty, thirty or even forty hours in incessant rains accompanied by strong winds. Writing of this many years later, Newton says, "I feel to this day some faint returns of the violent pains I thus contracted."

Returning with his master to the island, Newton sometimes applied himself to the study of mathematics. He had a copy of Barrow's *Euclid* and would go to the corners of the island and draw his diagrams with a long stick on the sand. In this manner "I often beguiled my sorrows, and almost forgot my feelings; and thus without any other assistance I made myself in a good measure master of the first six books of Euclid." It is interesting that Wordsworth uses this part of Newton's story in "The Prelude." Even Newton's own language is used in an early draft of "The Prelude":

And as I have read of one by shipwreck thrown
With fellow Sufferers whom the waves had spar'd
Upon a region uninhabited
An island of the Deep, who having brought
To land a single Volume and no more,
A Treatise of Geometry, was used,
Although of food and clothing destitute,
And beyond common wretchedness depress'd
To part from company and take his book,
Then first a self-taught pupil in those truths,
To spots remote and corners of the Isle
By the sea side, and draw his diagrams
With a long stick upon the sand, and thus
Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
Forget his feeling, . . . *

On one occasion during this period, Newton was busied in planting some lime trees. His master and mistress

* See Bernard Martin, *Ibid.*

chanced to pass by while he was at work and at length the master said, "Who knows but, by the time these trees grow up and bear, you may go home to England, obtain the command of a ship, and return to reap the fruits of your labours? We see strange things sometimes happen." Curiously enough this intended sarcasm proved to be a prediction and as Newton says, "They (one of them at least) lived to see me return from England, in the capacity he had mentioned, and pluck some of the first limes from these very trees."

In this situation he wrote to his father for help; consequently orders were given to a ship leaving Liverpool to bring John Newton home. Meanwhile he had secured a position with another slave-trader and found his situation so much improved that when the Liverpool ship finally arrived he declined at first to go aboard. But the thought of seeing Mary Catlett compelled him to reverse his decision. He was taken on board the ship, "Greyhound," as a passenger and he says, "I was suddenly freed from a captivity of about fifteen months." *But little did he know what dangerous adventure would be his on the return trip to England.*

"The Lord Have Mercy Upon Us"

On the return voyage to England Newton was exceedingly profane, so much so that the captain, himself no saint, often reproved Newton. But Providence was still at work in the life of John Newton! Among the few books on board ship was a copy of Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, which he read many times in the course of the voyage, rather carelessly, until one day he chanced to ask himself, "What if these things should be true?" He could not bear the force of the inference; terminating his reading at once, he joined his shipmates in vain conversation in an attempt to drown his disturbing thoughts.

That night Newton retired as usual, but was rudely awakened by the sound of a violent sea breaking over the deck. His cabin was soon filled with water and no one doubted that the ship was sinking. One man was washed overboard. The sea tore away the upper timbers on one side of the ship. Going to the pumps immediately, he noticed the water was increasing against their efforts and had it not been for their uncommon cargo of beeswax and wood, which are specifically lighter than water, the ship would have sunk.

About nine the next morning, after the ship had been emptied of some of the water and the leaks had been stopped, Newton, nearly spent with cold and labor, went to the captain and said, "If this will not do, the Lord have mercy upon us!" These words, uttered spontaneously, represented the first desire for mercy Newton had breathed in many years. He was struck instantly by his own words

and then he said to himself, "What mercy can there be for me?" *He returned to the pumps, almost every wave breaking over his head, and remained there till noon, fully expecting that every time the vessel descended into the sea it would never rise again.* "Though I dreaded death now, and my heart foreboded the worst," said Newton, "still I was but half convinced, and remained for a space of time in a sullen frame, a mixture of despair and impatience."

The next day was March twenty-first; he continued at the pumps from three in the morning till near noon and then—so exhausted was he—he gave it up, went to his bed for rest and was almost indifferent whether he should ever get up. In an hour's time he was called and this time went to the helm. There he made opportunity for reflection: "I thought, allowing the Scripture premises, there never was or could be such a sinner as myself; and then comparing the advantages I had broken through, I concluded at first that my sins were too great to be forgiven." About six in the evening the ship was freed from water, but even then there was no more than a glimmer of hope. Newton continued to contemplate; he recalled the life of Christ and how He had died for sins not His own. But, as he says, "the comfortless principles of infidelity were deeply riveted, and I rather *wished* than *believed*" the Gospel to be true. Newton struggled most over the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. He determined to examine the New Testament, however, and one of the first sources of assistance was found in Luke 11:13, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" On this

Scriptural basis Newton concluded that he would ask God for His Spirit, and that if the promise were in fact true, God would make it good. So it was that he decided to take the Gospel for granted at least for the moment.

But Newton and the crew on the "Greyhound" were by no means certain that they would ever see land again. The wind had moderated, but the ship and her sails were in a wretched state of repair. Provisions had grown small and the crew could scarcely produce energy to match the strenuous labor demanded at the pumps. For nearly four weeks they drifted in this condition but at length they sighted land. With gratitude in their hearts, they arrived at Lough Swilly in Ireland. When they came into port, says Newton, "our very last victuals were boiling in the pot." Before they had been anchored two hours a violent wind arose and had their ship, in its condition, been at sea it must have sunk this time for certain.

"About this time," says John Newton, "I began to know that there is a God, who hears and answers prayer."

Newton's experience at sea was significant; it was the turning point in his life: "I was no longer an infidel, I heartily renounced my former profaneness . . . and was sincerely touched with a sense of the undeserved mercy I had received, in being brought safe through so many dangers." He repented of his misspent life and "proposed an immediate reformation," and he could say, "I was quite freed from the habit of swearing, which seemed to have been as deeply rooted in me as a second nature." To be sure, Newton was no mature Christian at this point but this was the beginning "of my return to God, or rather of *his* return to me. . . ."

'He Has Got Shoes!'

It was February 12, 1750. Over seven years had passed since their eyes had first met and they had known almost instantly that they loved each other. Now at long last it was their wedding day—the wedding day of Mary Catlett and John Newton. It was providential that John ever lived to see this day, so dangerously adventurous had been those seven years. But now the day had arrived. They were married in St. Margaret's Church, Chatham, and embarked on what was to be a remarkably happy marriage. John's deep devotion to Mary is revealed in *Letters to a Wife*. "We have, perhaps, been sometimes too happy in each other," he wrote tenderly while at sea. Some of these letters were written during his days as captain of a slave ship.

Actually, his experience as a slave trader began back in 1748 sometime after his conversion in the storm at sea. But the slave traffic was no way for a "converted" man to make a living! It was perhaps the most infamous phase of eighteenth century life. One contemporary account—an official one and apparently a characteristic one too!—says the men slaves on a certain ship had "no sustenance of any kind for forty-eight hours except a dram." In this situation is little wonder than "many of the slaves had got out of irons, and were attempting to break up the gratings and the seamen not daring to go down the hold to clear our pumps, we were obliged, for the preservation of our lives, to kill fifty of the ringleaders. It is impossible to describe the misery the poor slaves underwent,

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having had no fresh water for five days. Their dismal cries and shrieks, and most frightful looks, added a great deal to our misfortune; four of them were found dead, and one drowned herself in the hold." Sometimes the slaves were chained to the ship's deck and were "packed almost as close together as 'rows of books on shelves!'" The gigantic proportions of this slave traffic in the eighteenth century are unbelievable, the number of slaves running into the millions.*

In spite of the infamous nature of slavery, Newton embarked upon a career as transporter of black men. It all began when he went to Liverpool and found a friend in Mr. Manesty who offered him the command of a slave ship. But he preferred to go out first as a mate "to learn to obey and to acquire a further insight into business." So it was that in August of 1748, John Newton sailed from Liverpool to Africa in purchase of slaves. They took their discontented segment of humanity to Charleston, South Carolina, and returned to Liverpool on December 6, 1749.

During this voyage Newton lapsed back into sin for a time. It is unbelievable that now—even after the storm at sea which so nearly took his life—he should forget so easily! He confesses that soon after his departure from Liverpool, he grew "slack in waiting upon the Lord." His conversation became "vain and trifling." Then, he laments, "though my heart smote me often, yet my armour was gone, and I declined fast; and by the time we arrived in Guinea, I seemed to have forgotten all the Lord's mercies and my own engagements, and was (profaneness excepted) almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared

* See J. W. Brady, *This Freedom—Whence?*, pp. 41-42.

a train of temptations," says sailor Newton, "and I became his easy prey; and for about a month he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which, a few months before, I should not have supposed myself capable." The observation that follows reveals the tragedy of relapse into sin: "I was now fast bound in chains; I had little desire, and no power at all to recover myself." It is no wonder Newton, writing later of this backslidden state, said with the Apostle, "Take heed lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

In the providence of God a severe fever brought him to his senses and in due course his former happy relationship with God was restored.

Some months following his marriage, he made his first voyage as commander of a ship, the "Duke of Argyle." This was in August of 1750. He sailed to Guinea, again in purchase of slaves. It was on this and subsequent voyages that Newton wrote the larger part of *Letters to a Wife*, a volume which William Cowper was to read with eager interest.* In his leisure hours Newton continued the study of Latin which he had begun on the previous journey. On that previous trip he had learned a good deal of Horace and had familiarized himself with passages in a Latin Bible. On this present trip he began the study of other Latin writers and within the space of two or three voyages had acquainted himself with over half a dozen authors. In the course of this particular voyage he returned to the Plantanes where he had suffered so long

* Of *Letters to a Wife*, Cowper, in his delightful way, wrote Newton that it was "both interesting and amusing; and I never cease to wonder at the fertility of your invention, that, shut up as you were in your vessel, and disunited from the rest of mankind, could yet furnish you with such variety, and with the means likewise, of saying the same thing in so many different ways."

at cruel hands. The words of the old master now echoed in his ears, "Who knows . . . you may go home to England . . . obtain the command of a ship and return to reap the fruits of your labors. We see strange things sometimes happen." When he stepped ashore "two black females were passing; the first who noticed me observed to her companion, that 'there was Newton, and, what do you think?—he has got shoes!' 'Ay,' said the other 'and stockings too!' They had never seen me before with either."

Newton returned from this voyage in December of 1751. Before going on the next, he read Doddridge's *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Honourable Col. James Gardiner*, which made a deep impression on him. Gardiner had sinned deeply and had repented; Newton, of course, saw the parallel to his own life and thus said this biography affected him more than any book he had read up to that time. At the same time he read Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man* and Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs* which was a "best seller" in the eighteenth century. These books made a definite contribution to the development of his faith.

In July, 1752, he sailed again from Liverpool, this time in the "African." He now spent much time in prayer and meditation, and on Sundays called his crew together for worship: ". . . At eleven o'clock the ship's bell rings my own little congregation about me. To them I read the morning service according to the Liturgy." And sometimes he used prayers which he had composed himself. He called the crew for worship again just before Sunday afternoon tea. Wrote Newton to a friend, "There are few moments of my life afford me a more real pleasure,

than when I am thus attempting the part of a Minister to about twenty-five people." This is certainly one of the earliest suggestions on record that Newton might dedicate himself to the ministry. In August, 1753, he arrived once more in the port of Liverpool.

Six weeks later, in mid-October, he set out on his third and final voyage after his marriage. In the course of this journey he met Captain Alexander Clunie, a member of the Church of the Rev. Samuel Brewer of Stepney. For six years Newton had attempted, by the help of the Bible and a few good books, to school himself in the Christian religion. But he was in many respects confused, which is not surprising since he had not made a single acquaintance, from the time of his conversion until now, who could assist him in his search for Divine truth. Captain Clunie proved to be the guide Newton needed; he was "a man of experience in the things of God. . . ." "He not only improved my understanding," says Newton, "but inflamed my heart. He encouraged me to open my mouth in social prayer. He taught me the advantage of Christian converse. He put me upon an attempt to make my profession more public, and to venture to speak for God." Through Captain Clunie his "conceptions became clearer and more evangelical." Further, he introduced Newton to the chief religious controversies of the day and told him where he could contact evangelically minded people in London. During his homeward journey, which took seven weeks, he had time to digest Captain Clunie's teachings. Newton anchored in Liverpool on August 9, 1754.

Newton was now to set sail in another ship, the "Bee." Early in November, however, he was attacked by a kind of

apoplexy which for a time deprived him of both sense and motion. He recovered quickly but it was thought advisable that he give up the sea, which he did two days before the "Bee" sailed. This was the first and last attack of apoplexy Newton ever suffered. When he learned that the "Bee" was driven ashore by the slaves at Mano and that the captain, second mate and doctor were "all killed in a barbarous manner," Newton said that his illness was an act of Providence. It was providential from another point of view too, said Newton, in that this was God's way of answering his prayer that He would "fix me in a more humane calling." How a man as devout as Newton could have been employed in slave-trading is a question often asked. But slavery—in spite of its horrors*—was commonly accepted in eighteenth century England, and it was even argued that the New Testament upheld the practice. Newton sums up his situation when he says that "Custom, example, and interest, had blinded my eyes. I did it ignorantly. . . ." Later in life, Newton was to work with Wilberforce and the Abolitionists in their fight against the slave trade.

* Newton was probably one of the kindest slave captains of the entire century. In one place he says he used the "thumb screws" only once in all his voyages.

"Torn off from the World"

Several months elapsed between the time Newton left the sea and his next job. In this interval he met a number of Evangelicals, including Brewer of Stepney, from whom Newton received "many helps both in public and in private." He also made the acquaintance of Whitefield who was to exercise a continuing influence on him. Furthermore, he had a good deal of Evangelical literature at this time. In a word, he steeped himself in the thought of Evangelical Christianity, for his time was largely taken up in churchgoing, reading and interviewing, and these activities were always in connection with the "Methodist" movement.

In August of 1755, Newton was appointed Tide Surveyor of the Port of Liverpool. Holding this position, he had a certain amount of leisure time at his command, much of which he spent in meditation, churchgoing and study. He became better acquainted with Whitefield and met John Wesley, as well as other Evangelicals. Towards the end of 1756 he began the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. These efforts were wholly for self-improvement, but it was not long until Newton began to think about preparing specifically for the Christian ministry; some friends had suggested the idea to him.

Newton kept a notebook—a sort of diary—which reveals his thoughts about the possibility of going into the ministry.* In this fascinating document, Newton says that "the first mention of the ministry made little im-

* Yet unpublished, this notebook (Illus. I) is in the possession of Miss Catherine Bull who lives in England. She is the great, great, great granddaughter of the Reverend William Bull, who was a friend of John Newton.

pression on me, but in a small time it took firmer hold in my mind." At length the subject of the ministry found a place in his prayers, a little later he declared his readiness to go into the ministry if it be God's will, and finally he dedicated himself to the service of the Church.

Newton did not decide to go into the ministry without much careful thought; the notebook which consists of a good many pages is painstaking in its analysis and is proof that Newton did not rush into this sacred profession. Further, he put himself to rather severe tests, one of which was that he should, within the space of several weeks, "be able to read a chapter in the Hebrew Bible with tolerable ease." When one is reminded that Newton had practically no formal education—and this when he was a very young child—it is astounding that Newton was able to write on June 23, 1758, "By the divine blessing upon my studies I can now read a chapter very clearly in the manner I proposed."

But even the successful "passing" of this self-imposed Hebrew test was not a sufficiently satisfying reason for Newton to enter the ranks of the clergy. There were now six weeks before his next birthday, his thirty-fourth. In these six weeks, he vowed, he would spend as much time as "I can conveniently command, to wait upon the Lord, to examine my own heart, to consider at large the nature, dignity, difficulty and importance of the great undertaking I have in view." If, after the six weeks, his mind was "still engaged to the work" of preaching, he would devote his birthday to "solemn fasting" and prayer.

The notebook now reveals his sense of total unworthiness, but he is nonetheless aware of his unique qualifica-

tions: "If Thou permittest me to declare that faithful saying, *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*; surely the words, *of whom I am chief* would be peculiarly expressive . . . in my mouth. I could stand forth and propose myself instead of a thousand arguments in proof of the doctrine; I might well hope to be of a singular use as a pattern of Thy longsuffering to all that should repent and believe." Newton realizes that his unique experience will be no substitute for Scripture knowledge, a growing religious experience, "an eminent degree of discernment," an "ardent thirst . . . for the salvation of souls," an aptitude of public speaking, not to mention "zeal, courage, diligence, faithfulness, tenderness and self-denial." He recognizes further that pastoral life is busy indeed and determines not to enter "upon it with confined or indolent aims" as some do. He concludes that, in the light of his own inadequacy, if God wishes him to enter the ministry He will have to "mould me, frame me and strengthen me" as a potter does his clay.

Newton wanted *evidence* that it was the Divine will for him to be a preacher, and he writes of the "most satisfactory marks of a call" in a clear and helpful manner. The first "mark" is that one must desire earnestly to promote "the glory of God and the salvation of souls." The second is that there must be a "serious sense" of the greatness, dignity and difficulty of ministerial work. Lack of this "serious sense" is often the cause for failure. The third "mark" of a call is that the candidate must have a "measure of gifts bestowed suitable to the work." Not that God is limited in whom He can use, but one should be willing to examine critically his native endowments and

come up with an honest answer. Still in connection with the idea of a call, Newton makes a fourth observation—an extremely wise one—about denominational affiliation. “Whoever has a call from God should likewise have a direction from him too, under what form or denomination he shall appear.” He admits that some denominations are nearer the first century Church than others in teaching and practice, and that some may even be “better suited for edification (to appearance) than others.” Then he adds, “Yet I am almost persuaded that if some ministers now living were to quit the Church in which the Lord employs them, even for one more agreeable to the gospel rule, it would lessen their usefulness, and upon the whole be a wrong step. When I consider the various tempers, talents and sentiments both of ministers and people, I make no doubt but the Lord, the great Captain who assigns every man his post, adapts the one to the other with a propriety truly admirable. . . . I make no doubt but that Luther and Calvin were more useful as they were, than if each had possessed the other’s sentiments, or even than if they had both been what we call Calvinists—each had his particular employment marked out, and his qualifications were adapted accordingly.”

Newton now nears the end of the six weeks, his birthday being close at hand. During these weeks, he has consulted friends about his going into the Christian ministry, and only Samuel Brewer has responded favorably. But Brewer’s reply was encouraging for he did not give hasty or thoughtless advice; his words were therefore worth serious consideration. Moreover, Newton had some further encouragement in a little society of young people

which he had organized. "We have had three meetings and I have found much enlargement and comfort in speaking to and with them, particularly last night, when tho I had nothing considerable prepared for the purpose, I found a pleasing liberty and enlargement both in thought and expression."

Within a few days of this experience he dedicated himself to the ministry. He spent an entire day in fasting and prayer before making his final decision: "It is drawing near five in ye evening and I have been waiting upon the Lord in retirement with fasting and prayer since six in the morning." It is no wonder Newton wrote out his dedication with such devotion: "I now enter upon and give myself up to a new view of life. From this day I only wait for light and direction when and where to move and to begin; and for this I pray that I may be enabled [to] wait patiently till I clearly see the Lord going before me and making me a plain path. But in my own mind I already consider myself as torn off from the world and worldly concerns, and devoted and appointed for sanctuary service."

Actually, Newton did have to wait patiently. It was to be six years before ordination. But all this time God was preparing a man who was to become, as Sir George Trevelyan, the English historian, has observed, the real founder of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England.

“Especially I Wonder that I Wonder No More”

In 1758 Newton applied for, but was refused episcopal ordination. In February of the next year he applied again but was refused. Newton had declared his sympathies with the “Methodists” and was therefore called “enthusiastic” (radical) by the Church of England. John Wesley makes clear in his *Journal* that he was opposed to the way Newton was being treated: “I had a good deal of conversation with Mr. N———n. His case is very peculiar. Our Church requires that clergymen should be men of learning, and, to this end, have a university education. But how many have a university education, and yet no learning at all? Yet these men are ordained! Meantime, one of eminent learning, as well as unblamable behaviour, cannot be ordained *because he was not at the University!* What a mere farce is this! Who would believe that any Christian bishop would stoop to so poor an evasion.”

Newton more than once thought of becoming a Dissenting minister, but in 1763 he received fresh encouragement about becoming a clergyman of the Establishment, for it was in that year that Thomas Haweis wrote a letter to Newton which made a “distinct proposal of my taking orders in the Church.” Some months later, Lord Dartmouth, at the request of Dr. Haweis, presented Newton with the Curacy of Olney. On Sunday April 29, 1764 Newton was ordained deacon; on Sunday May 27 he opened his commission at Olney; and on Sunday June 17 he was ordained priest by the Bishop of Lincoln.

The early decades of the eighteenth century constitute a dark picture in English history. Morality was at a low ebb; there were few schools; much of the available literature was unfit for public consumption; many governmental officials were corrupt; the daily laborer's wages were insufficient for the food and clothing his family needed; there was a crying need for prison reform; slave-trading was considered one of Britain's most profitable businesses and was defended by the so-called religious. As for religion, Puritanism was no longer a force in the national life. On the whole the clergy were possessed of no dynamic faith—a fact which applied to Nonconformity as well as the Establishment—which meant that sermons were cold, seldom warm and heart-searching.

Into this world came the Wesleys with a message that awakened the English nation to its need of God and social reform. Whitefield and a host of others joined in the fight for morality and Evangelical religion. To take just a few examples: Grimshaw and Henry Venn preached in Yorkshire, Rowlands in Wales, Walker in Cornwall, Toplady in Devon, Fletcher in Shropshire, Romaine and Haweis in London, Berridge in Beds.

So it was that in 1764 John Newton came to Olney to preach the same Evangelical religion that was stirring England and bringing her to her knees. And it was not long until Olney became one of the centers of the Evangelical world. Newton's own amazing experiences did much to awaken Olney's inhabitants. In August of 1764, shortly after he arrived, Newton's autobiography, the *Authentic Narrative*, was published. In his journal Newton expressed hope that the volume would "give some

additional weight to my ministry here. The people stare at me since reading [my *Authentic Narrative*], and well they may. I am indeed a wonder to many, a wonder to myself, especially I wonder that I wonder no more."

Newton's experiences did indeed add weight to his ministry, and this coupled with his conscientious, prayerful efforts made his ministry a success. It was during this period that William Cowper came to live at Olney. He and Newton wrote the Olney hymns, and the people of Olney—and later of the whole world—sang such praises as, "Jesus, where'er thy people meet," "Safely through another week," "Amazing Grace."

"Neither Short Days, Uncertain Weather, nor Dirty Roads . . ."

John Newton awoke early; the sun was streaming in his window as he lay contemplating the day before him. It was Sunday morning May 27, 1764. This was an exciting day. It was the day John would preach his first two sermons at Olney. He was less fearful than chal-

lenged, for he was no foreigner to pulpit experience, having been interim minister at Warwick Congregational Church for three months in 1760.* That was not all; he had traveled and preached in Yorkshire with some degree of success, and in Liverpool he preached "before thousands." But now he was Vicar of a Church! He had a pulpit he could call his own and a flock for which to care. His whole being pulsated and throbbed with the excitement of the day before him.

There were so many new people to meet, and there were a thousand things to demand his attention, even on this first day. But the day went fast; now the shadows of evening were stretched out, and he prepared himself for the night's rest. Before retiring, he penned these words in his journal: "Opened my commission at Olney, preaching in the morning from Psalm lxx. 1; afternoon, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. . . . I find a cordial reception amongst those who know the truth." This cordial reception Newton was to enjoy for many years to come.

Within the space of two months Newton could write his wife who was visiting in London, "On Sunday a very great congregation." By year's end he had a sizable and loyal group of churchgoers. "Neither short days, uncertain weather, nor dirty roads," he says, "make any considerable diminution in our assemblies." He adds, "their attention and seriousness give us hope that they do not all come in vain."

When John Newton had been minister in Olney fourteen months, the Church was no longer sufficiently large

* It is interesting that the well known New Testament scholar of our day, Professor C. H. Dodd of Cambridge University, was minister of Warwick Congregational Church from 1912-1915 and from 1918-1919.

to contain the people. A gallery was added, but Newton observed that "there seemed no more room in the body of the Church than before." He told a friend about his remodeled Church: "I have a church, which will hold (with a gallery built since I came) near 2000 people, and it is very well filled." He goes on to indicate that people come from all parts, even as far as five or six miles (no small distance for that day!)

By the time the Olney parson had been at work eighteen months, he had added numerous regular services and enlarged them all. His schedule of services now looked like this:

Sunday 6 a.m.: Prayer Meeting

Morning: Worship and Sermon

Afternoon: Worship and Sermon

"After tea": Prayer and hymn-singing at the
vicarage

Evening: Worship and Sermon

Monday Evening: Men's Bible study group at the
vicarage

Tuesday 5 a.m.: Prayer meeting for the nation
and the international situation

Evening: The largest of the week-day
services

Wednesday: Classes for young people and in-
quirers

Thursday Afternoon: Children's meeting

Evening: Service in the Church with ser-
mon. It was attended by peo-
ple from many neighboring
villages.

Friday Evening: Meeting for members of his society.

Nor was this the extent of Newton's leadership in religious meetings. He often preached and conducted prayer meetings in the nearby villages; examples are the prayer societies he organized in the towns of Ravenstone and Denton. Moreover, he frequently called extra meetings in the Olney Church, for he had his people trained to come to Church at a moment's notice, as evidenced in this journal entry: "In the afternoon Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, called. We soon set the bells ringing to give notice of preaching."

"Inhabited Chiefly by the Half-Starved"

Olney, a small market town, was known in the eighteenth century for its pillow lace, which was produced by the women and children (and occasionally by the men) in their cottages. The average woman worked ten or

twelve hours a day. At an early age children were placed in classes of twenty to thirty, crowded into one of the larger cottage rooms, to be taught the trade. During the winter, light from a single candle might serve three or four laborers. The workers could not afford coal heat; they kept their feet warm "on little earthenware pots filled with charcoal or hot wood-ash." Factory-produced lace was quickly supplanting that produced in the home; thus, the lace-makers were fortunate if they earned five shillings per week (sixpence of this was for thread). Children earned but a few pence.

William Cowper, in a letter to William Unwin, summarized the condition of Olney when he called the little town "a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and ragged of the earth."

Such were the conditions that rendered some of Olney's inhabitants mentally unstable. "Whether it is owing to the sedentary life the women live here," says Newton, "poring over their (lace) pillows for ten or twelve hours every day, and breathing confined air in their crowded little rooms, or whatever may be the immediate cause, I suppose we have near a dozen . . . disordered in their heads." Olney's condition drove still others to escape the world of reality in drink.

Olney needed social, economic and spiritual assistance, and Newton was to help his people at these very points by his pastoral care and his preaching.

John Thornton, reputed to be the wealthiest merchant in England, knew Olney's condition. He was introduced to Newton by Lord Dartmouth, read the *Authentic Narrative*, and was much impressed by Newton's character

and story. Not long after he met Newton, Thornton wrote him a letter which determined to no small extent the spiritual and social awakening in Olney: "Be hospitable and keep an open house for such as are worthy of entertainment—help the poor and needy: I will stately allow you two hundred pounds a year, and readily send whenever you have occasion to draw more." Newton received from Thornton for the poor and needy "upwards of three thousand pounds" during the time he resided at Olney. Newton's regular stipend was only sixty pounds per year, but John Thornton's assistance made it possible for Newton to entertain many people in the manse—there were dinner or over-night guests at the manse almost continuously—and it helped him contact people who otherwise might never have been drawn into the Church. In addition to John Thornton, Lord Dartmouth and others assisted in the never-ending campaign to help the poor.

One of the most striking examples of Newton's social sense is seen in an unpublished letter to Mrs. John Thornton. He speaks of visiting a woman in Leicester who had been dismissed from the hospital after three days as an incurable tubercular. "Her pain was great, her poverty extreme, her apartment seemed the residence of Wretchedness, she had a bad husband and four small children." The next morning Newton preached to a very large congregation and told the people that one characteristic of righteous living was giving assistance to the needy. "The result of . . . my sermon was that people visited her . . . and amended her situation." The next time Newton visited her, the "room was decent; clean bed-clothes, cake, oranges, current jelly, and the like shewed that her ac-

quaintance had been enlarged. She spoke much of those whom she said the Lord had sent to her."

It is possible to cull from the thought and work of the evangelicals their principle of social action: When God's people make an effort to meet man's physical needs, rapport is established between the Church and the world, and men are more apt to respond to God. But there is a corollary to this principle which is not less important than the principle itself: Having met God, it is expected that a change in man's conduct will be observable. Such texts as the one on being a new man in Christ Jesus have ethical as well as spiritual implications in the religion of the evangelicals.

"In Their Own Little Way"

There was in Olney a mansion known as the Great House, which was the property of Lord Dartmouth, but unoccupied in January of 1765. Newton secured permission to use it for some of the weekday religious services, but he wished "in the first instance" to employ it "for the

meetings of the children." He met the children at the Great House after dinner on Thursday afternoons. Though the room in which the children met was large, "it proved rather too small for the attendance," says Newton. "I had eighty-nine the first time. . . ." Newton defines his purpose in meeting with the children as "not so much to teach them the Catechism (though I shall attend to that likewise), as to talk, preach, and reason with them, and explain the Scriptures to them *in their own little way*."

The children's class grew to the extent that ultimately it had to be held in the chancel of the church, the Great House no longer being capable of housing the group. Thus Newton writes that, "The children on Thursday now amount to one hundred and seventy-five, and additions are offering every week: they make a pretty show in the chancel." In following months the group sometimes exceeded two hundred. For the use of the little group, Newton selected books such as Isaac Watts' *Divine Songs for Children*, Janeway's *Token*, and Doddridge's *Sermons to Young People*.

Newton's work with children was not limited to the town of Olney. Occasionally he visited and preached to the children of a boarding school for girls in Northampton, superintended by a Mrs. Trinder. (Newton also visited a boarding school for boys which was overseen by the Rev. John Ryland.) In his diary, John Newton once wrote, "The Lord is pleased to own me to the comfort of the serious young persons in Mrs. Trinder's school, of whom I conversed with about twelve this time, who seem very promising." It may have been on his return from

this visit that Newton received a written statement, signed by fifteen of the pupils, expressing their appreciation of his services, and wishing his speedy return.

In his work with children, John Newton was really a sort of pioneer for he helped pave the way for the work of men like Robert Raikes who founded the Sunday School. John loved children very much but was never blessed with any of his own. He loved his parish children as if they were his own, however, and the love he got in return plus the love they expressed to God, were the only rewards he wanted.

"She May Play Well Upon the Harpsichord"

If Newton attempted to lead the little children of his community to Christ, he was not less concerned about helping the young people. Every New Year's evening he held a service in the church just for his youth. New Year's afternoon found him in the study praying and

preparing for this meeting which was "usually laid upon my heart with more weight than any other opportunity in the course of the year." It was his habit to "beg a blessing upon the important service of the evening," and his prayers were answered. Once he recorded, "Afterwards, was favoured in preaching with remarkable liberty."

There are numerous references to young people in Newton's published sermons, a fact which indicates that he thought often of them when preparing his addresses. In one sermon he speaks of "young converts, in the first warmth of their affection. . . ." Moreover he met with them in small groups. On Sunday mornings at six he met a group for prayer. (It is not likely John Newton would have met with success were he living in our century, when it is difficult enough to get young folks out to Sunday school by nine forty-five!) On Fridays Pastor Newton met a group at Molly Mole's house, which he facetiously called the "Mole Hill."

How careful did the kind Olney pastor follow the spiritual development of his young people! "Have had my two young ladies in my study," he records in his journal. "Miss Manesty I trust has been truly awakened and brought to the feet of Jesus since she came down. . . . Miss Moody, likewise, who was seeking the Lord when she was here five years ago, seems in a growing way." Typical of his advice to youth is a letter to a young lady; part of the letter reads, "An accomplished and well-behaved young woman is an amiable object in the sight of her fellow-creatures. She may be sensible and obliging; she may dress and dance genteelly; she may play well upon the harpsichord; she may have much finer work to show

than the coats and garments which Dorcas made; and, by her vivacity and good humour, she may become the idol of all her acquaintance: but, if . . . her heart is cold to the love and glory of God our Saviour . . . she is dead while she liveth. In the sight of God her Maker, she is insensible and ungrateful, she is poor, blind, and miserable."

It was this evangelical warmth and this practical concern which brought John Newton's young people into a saving experience of God.

"Chiefly on Account of My Maid Molly"

The prayer and Bible study groups which Newton started and established played a significant part in his Olney ministry. "The prayer-meetings . . . are still kept up with spirit," he once said. "The Lord gives a savour of his Spirit in them, which makes them well attended. . . . I think nothing has been more visibly useful to

strengthen my heart, and to unite the people closely together in the bonds of love." Some of these meetings were held at the Great House. There Newton gave many expository addresses. Sometimes an exposition would be presented on a text brought to mind by a current event, or the need of a parishioner, such as the time he "spoke from 2 Peter i. 10, chiefly on account of my maid, Molly, who is perplexed and tempted on the point of election." At other times the Parson treated a book of the Bible systematically, discussing it section by section over a given period of time.

The chief of these prayer meetings was the one which met on Tuesday evening. About forty came to the first meeting, but the size of the group increased until in 1769 it was necessary to move it to a larger room which seated one hundred and thirty persons. Newton's addresses on the *Pilgrim's Progress* were presented twice at these Tuesday services; each time he did the series it took over three years. Sometimes Newton invited other ministers to speak at the Great House. William Bull, a close friend of the Olney Pastor, sometimes spoke at the Tuesday service, and of his first Tuesday sermon Newton said, "Mr. Bull spoke excellently at the Great House to-night. . . . I hope it will not be . . . [his] last [appearance there]."

Another Great House prayer and Bible study service met on Sunday evenings, and it too was well attended. Josiah Bull refers to a record of those who offered prayer at these services, and the poet Cowper's name appears a number of times. Someone is reported to have stated "that of all men he ever heard pray, no one equalled Mr. Cow-

per." This Sunday prayer service grew to the extent that Newton had to move it to the sanctuary.

Then there was the group which met at the vicarage for prayer and hymn-singing on Sunday afternoons after tea. Like the Great House gatherings and sanctuary services, it grew too large for its meeting place. Newton was forced to send tickets "to those who I hope are serious, to exclude some who only come to look about them. Upon these occasions," Newton observed, "I have about seventy persons of both sexes, of whom I have good hope the Lord has touched their hearts."

"He Had Heard Famous Things of Olney"

If the Vicar of Olney Church witnessed the effects of his preaching and other labors in an increase of followers as well as in an increase in the number of public meetings, he also saw accompanying effects in a spiritual and social awakening. Toward the end of his first January in Olney, Newton wrote a friend that his "congregations [are]

large and serious. Almost every week I hear of some either awakened or seriously impressed." Later (in 1769) Newton wrote that, "My people (I mean the awakened) are lively and unanimous—ordinances much prized, and closely attended—evident marks of growth. . . ." The period from the latter part of 1771 to the opening of 1772 was particularly rewarding in terms of spiritual advance, as the parson indicated in a letter to his friend Mr. Brewer: "It has been, and I hope still is, a time of grace and revival. I know not but we have had as many awakened within about three months past as for two or three years before. . . ."

So went the reports of Olney's spiritual awakening, and it is amazing indeed that this revival of genuine religion was fairly continuous during John Newton's sixteen years as pastor of the Olney Church.

But notice the *extent* of the awakening! In the children's, young people's, and the prayer and Bible study groups, there developed a vigorous piety which spread to the cottages of the lace makers and to the outlying parts of the parish. In a letter to William Unwin, written shortly after Newton left Olney to live in London, William Cowper expresses his appreciation for money sent by a Mr. Smith for Olney's poor. Cowper summarizes the extent of the spiritual awakening instigated by John Newton and others: In Olney, "where the Gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects of charity."

But John Newton's influence spread beyond the borders of Olney. People from the neighboring villages came to his services. He had "a larger number of communicants than usual, several from Northampton" (twelve miles from Olney), he reported on one occasion. There were also visitors who came from greater distances. In a letter to his wife he says, "I have had a visit from a lively and judicious Christian from Shipton, in Worcestershire. His name is Richard Rand. *He had heard famous things of Olney*, and came to see it." A constant stream of people came to hear John Newton preach or to counsel with him about their problems. They heard a man who spoke with authority about the way of salvation, and they went away having found help from God.

"We Were Seldom Separated"

In Newton's Olney parish lived William Cowper, the poet of the Evangelical Party. Cowper's contact with evangelicals began about seven years after the death of his father (his father died in 1756), when Cowper suffered

a second horrible mental collapse. John, his brother, called in their evangelically minded cousin, Martin Madan. Madan was a Calvinist and Cowper took this Calvinism and distorted it into the belief that he was damned eternally. Cowper was sent to an asylum and put under the care of Dr. Nathaniel Cotton, an evangelical who nurtured him back to temporary mental health. Subsequently Cowper moved to Huntingdon where he contacted the Unwins with whom he took up residence. He participated wholeheartedly in the many daily religious exercises of this typical revivalistic family. After the death of Mr. Unwin, Cowper, with Mrs. Unwin, who was now to be his housekeeper, moved to Olney to be under the ministry of John Newton.

Cowper was deeply impressed by John Newton and his ability to do pastoral work, and Newton was equally impressed with Cowper's abilities. A friendship ensued which was to last until the two men were separated by Cowper's death in 1800. ". . . For nearly twelve years," says Newton, "we were seldom separated for twelve hours at a time, when we were awake and at home." Cowper often went with Newton as he made his pastoral calls and the parson grew to appreciate the poet's skill in visiting "the affectionate poor people" of Olney, for he "could give comfort though he could not receive any himself." Cowper also supported Newton's Great House and sanctuary services, and when the preacher journeyed to other towns to hold services Cowper often accompanied him.

Cowper admired Newton's preaching. "It is plain and neat . . . and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment." In the last decade

of Cowper's life, he wrote Newton that, "The years that we have seen together will never be out of our remembrance; and so long as we remember them we must remember you with affection. In the pulpit, and out of the pulpit, you have laboured in every possible way to serve us. . . ." So it was that Newton's preaching made its impression on Cowper, and it may be further said with Miss W. E. M. Brown that "If . . . there is a Christian philosopher to be recognized in Cowper, we surely owe that to Newton. After his conversion, Cowper would naturally, through studying the Bible and drawing upon the religious liveliness of his times, form what might be called a Christian philosophy, but surely not, without help and sympathy, one so complete and so revolutionary as we find in his poems of 1780. He had discussed it all with Newton, and had listened to the sermons of Newton, which in turn would be inspired by the daily conversations the two friends held together." *

One can almost see the two friends sitting at the tea table at four in the afternoon. They talked about many things—the townspeople, a little theology, but always John Newton talked about slavery. Cowper learned about the awfulness of the slave trade from Newton; in fact he heard so much and learned so much that Newton's passion for social reform is really mirrored in his poetry. Stopford A. Brooke has observed that with "Cowper the poetry of human wrong begins. . . ." Burns, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron continued the "long cry against oppression and evil done by man to man. . . ." *

* W. E. M. Brown, *The Polished Shaft*, p. 69.

* Stopford A. Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 56.

Listen to the beginning of "Pity for Poor Africans," in which we hear an echo of Newton's descriptions of the slave trade:

I own I am shocked at the purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans,
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

In the rest of the poem he attacks, in a sarcastic vein, the arguments for the continuance of the slave trade. These verses are typical:

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum?
Especially sugar, so needful we see!
What! give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes
Will heartily thank us no doubt for our pains:
If we do not buy the poor creatures they will,
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

William Cowper made Christ and Him crucified central to his thought. It was his conviction that the only remedy for the world's ills was the cross of Christ. Cowper no doubt got this idea from Martin Madan, Dr. Cotton and the Unwin family. But Newton deserves credit too! The seeds which had been sown earlier were now more deeply rooted and grew toward maturity. The free exchange of ideas which was inevitable in such a friendship as the Cowper-Newton one, the many sermons Cowper heard Newton preach, the habit the two men had of sending their written material to each other—all these factors combined to influence the thought of William Cowper, the poet of the Evangelical Revival.

“Like Nothing Which I Ever Heard”

Thomas Scott first heard of John Newton from an Olney pharmacist who said that Newton's preaching was “like nothing which I ever heard.” Scott was so intrigued by this statement that he determined to hear Newton preach, and from then on his life was never the same.

Scott was a minister in the Church of England, but in theology he was a Socinian; that is, he denied the Trinity with all that implies. Today we would call him a “Unitarian.” Unsympathetic toward the evangelical position, he nonetheless went to hear Newton preach, and that with reluctance and suspicion. He even suffered from guilt feelings apparently, for he says that when Mr. Newton announced his text, “to my great astonishment it was this, ‘Then Saul . . . filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?’ ” Scott knew that Newton preached extemporaneously, and he jumped to the conclusion that the preacher had chosen the text as a personal affront. This haunted Mr. Scott for weeks, but in later years he learned that Newton did not have so much as an inkling that he was in the audience.

In January of 1775, two of Thomas Scott's parishioners lay at the point of death. He had heard of the circumstance, but in keeping with his custom of making

pastoral calls only when requested to do so, he took no notice of the dying couple. He was sharply awakened to the seriousness of his error when he heard that his neighbor, John Newton, had walked several miles to visit the couple on more than one occasion. At this time Scott held the curacies of Stoke Goldington and Weston Underwood, not many miles from Olney. "Directly it occurred to me," says Scott in his *Force of Truth*—his spiritual autobiography—"that whatever contempt I might have for Mr. Newton's doctrines, I must acknowledge his practice to be more consistent with the ministerial character than my own." Scott resolved never again to be delinquent in the matter of pastoral visitation; he kept his vow.

Some seventeen months after this incident, Scott wrote Newton a letter, "very long and frank. It seems dictated by a spirit in search of truth," said Newton. A few days prior to writing this letter, Scott had encountered Newton in a ministerial gathering and attempted to engage him in argument. Newton refused to be drawn into controversy, but in the next day or two wrote Scott a brief letter and along with it sent a copy of one of his books, *Omicron's Letters*. Scott was grateful enough to reply with the long letter referred to above, but his real and stated purpose was to draw Newton into "a controversial discussion of our religious differences." The Olney parson believed there were definite evils accompanying controversy, and once again refused the invitation to debate. What the Olney vicar did do was to write a series of eight thoughtful letters in which he tactfully but unapologetically stated his beliefs. Replies came to several of the letters but after a time the correspondence was ended at

Scott's request. But Newton had made clear the necessity of the New Birth and the seriousness with which the preacher must take the gospel. It is clear that the evangelicals of the eighteenth century stood firmly on the belief that preaching which does not lead to change in people's lives is not true preaching. Thomas Scott did not fail to see that this was his brother minister's position.

In spite of his lack of cordiality to Newton, there were signs that Scott's preaching message was being reconstructed, for about this time he wrote his sister that zeal for the gospel and the salvation of souls is "indispensable for a minister of the gospel." Scott now began to study the Bible more closely, and developed the habit of frequent prayer. Actually, in Scott's first letter he had stated that he would search for truth with the aids of *prayer* and the *Bible*, and Newton encouraged him saying that God "has directed you to the right method." While Scott did use this twofold method, at first he worked on the principle that reason was above the revelation of God in the Bible. Newton's letters presented the opposite point of view and though it nursed Scott's prejudices, it also stimulated him to reconsider his theological beliefs. He spent a great deal of time studying the Bible and began gradually to reconstruct his message on this new foundation.

Coming nearer to evangelical views, he was still reluctant to associate with the Olney curate lest he be called an "enthusiast" or radical. But under discouraging circumstances he visited Newton and was so comforted "that my heart, being by this means relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection for him." From that time forward Scott was pleased to have Newton for a friend,

though he refused to make this known publicly, and had, even at that time, no intention of learning doctrinal truth from him.

By the end of 1777 we see taking shape the final stages of the redevelopment of Scott's preaching message. Early in the year, on Good Friday, Scott had delivered a sermon in which he presented his reworked views on the Atonement. Shortly after that he gave assent to the New Birth. Then followed the belief in the Trinity and the other doctrines of the evangelical faith. From first to last it had been a struggle for him to come to these conclusions, but Newton and the gospel had won out!

There was yet another step in the reconstruction of Scott's message. While his doctrinal message was changed, he confessed his own lack of spiritual insight. *How could he preach the New Birth if he had not experienced it himself?* He determined to hear Newton and other evangelicals preach and he received help soon. The secrets of his heart were discovered to himself "far beyond what I had hitherto noticed." He now saw the use of experience in pulpit work and was convinced that the best way to reach the hearts of the people was to speak from his own heart. He gradually saw his need of instruction and was finally brought to look at himself as a mere novice in gospel matters. So it was that he began experimentally "to perceive our Lord's meaning, when He says, 'Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein.' " With a note of victory Scott declared that now he could say that old things had passed away and behold, all things were new.

About this time Newton heard his protegee preach and

the Olney parson's heart was gladdened, for he says in his journal, "How soon, clearly, and solidly is he established in the knowledge and experience of Thy gospel, who but lately was a disputer against every point! . . . Often in my faint manner have I prayed to see some of my neighbors of the clergy awakened." Newton's prayers were answered, not only for Thomas Scott, but for a host of others. He was untiring in his efforts to guide ministers: from his desk came a constant stream of letters to them; he exchanged sermon ideas with some; he even took time to tutor a few young candidates for the ministry. Preachers came, sometimes from considerable distances, to sit at his feet and to catch the inspiration of his preaching. In *Scenes from Clerical Life*, George Eliot makes her fictitious character, the Rev. Amos Barton, claim "John Newton . . . as one of his doctrinal ideals." Amos Barton's attitude was typical of a whole circle of eighteenth century English ministers, for John Newton became the center of a great evangelical awakening among the clergy of the Church of England.

John Newton is not to be given all the credit for Thomas Scott's conversion; there were others who influenced him too. But Scott himself confessed that, "When Mr. Newton left Olney, I seemed to have lost my counselor." There can be no doubt that Newton's conscientious counseling played a significant part in making Thomas Scott the man that he was. In 1781 Scott became curate of Olney Church and though he did not attract the crowds Newton did, he was the instrument of much good. While at Olney he influenced the man who was to become the father of the modern missionary movement,

William Carey. In 1821 Carey wrote, "If there be anything of the Word of God in my soul, I owe much of it to Scott's preaching, when I first set out in the ways of the Lord." In 1785 Scott moved to London where he produced *The Family Bible*—a commentary which through the years has enjoyed a remarkable circulation. Indeed, to this very day, Scott's commentary is used. In London also he played a significant part in the founding of the Church Missionary Society. Perhaps the best known man Scott influenced was John Henry Newman, who says it was Scott "who first planted deep in my mind that fundamental truth" of the Trinity, and it was he "to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul. . . ."

"Amazing Grace!"

Well over a year after Cowper moved from Huntingdon to Olney, John Newton wrote to his friend Captain Clunie that "We are going to remove our prayer-meeting to the great room in the Great House. It is a noble place, with a parlour behind it, and holds one hundred and thirty people conveniently." It was for this occasion that two of the hymns, later to be published in *Olney Hymns*,

were composed: "O Lord, our languid souls inspire" written by Newton and "Jesus, where'er Thy people meet" by William Cowper. In the future Newton and Cowper—especially Newton—were to write many more hymns for the Great House meetings.

Sometime after, John suggested to William that they make a project of writing hymns regularly for evangelical use. In proposing the project Newton had a twofold design in view: (1) The first and principal one was "a desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere Christians. . . ." (2) But "it was likewise intended as a monument, to perpetuate the remembrance" of his "intimate and endeared friendship" with William Cowper. The original plan was that Cowper should have furnished a larger share of the hymns than he actually did. ". . . My part," says Newton in the preface to *Olney Hymns*, "would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and in a very different form, if the wise, though mysterious, providence of God, had not seen fit to cross my wishes." But "we had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any farther assistance." The Olney parson is, of course, referring here to William Cowper's mental illness, and Newton was hoping that the business of hymn-writing would get his friend's mind off his own problems and release him to mental health. But Newton's idea was not wholly successful—though no doubt it was helpful—and his disappointment was severe when Cowper could not continue. Newton hung his "harp upon the willows," as he says, and for some time "determined to proceed no

farther without him." But he finally resumed the work and wrote hymns more or less regularly until a few months before he moved from Olney.

There were interruptions of various sorts: preaching tours, the demands of the parish, and a number of things. But if his progress was slow, it was definite and "in a course of years, the Hymns amounted to a considerable number." Actually Newton had no plan to publish them because "I had so few of my friend's hymns to insert in the collection." But he gave in to the "judgement and desires of others" and at length overcame "the reluctance I long felt to see them in print."

So it was that in 1779 the *Olney Hymns* were published and this little book was to have an amazing circulation not only in Newton's own day, but in the next century. Even when the book itself—which went through many editions—was no longer printed, the hymns continued to be sung and to this day we enjoy the spiritual messages of the hymns of William Cowper and John Newton.

John dedicated the hymns to his "dear friends in the parish and neighbourhood of Olney, for whose use the hymns were originally composed. . . ." In writing for the poor, unlearned lace-makers and farmers, he employed for the most part the familiar meters and was always certain to make the sense of the lines easily and quickly grasped. He was careful to fill his hymns with material that would appeal to the intellectual level of his singers. It is no wonder, then, that he used the Bible a great deal—this was the best known book in Olney. He also writes about nature, the moon, sun and stars, the pastoral country round about Olney, and of course the sea which he

had made familiar to his people. Even Cowper, who had never been to sea, caught the spirit of the Olney sailor when he wrote his hymn, "The billows swell, the winds are high." Newton wrote about the experiences of his people and the events of the little community. A good example is the hymn "A lion, though by nature wild." A lion had been brought into town for exhibition, and Newton wrote his friend William Bull that "I went to see [the lion.] He was wonderfully tame, as familiar with his keeper, and as docile and obedient as a spaniel; yet the man told me he had his surly fits, when they dare not touch him. No looking glass could express my face more justly than this lion did my heart. I could trace every feature. As wild and fierce by nature, yea, much more so, but grace has in some measure tamed me. I know and love my Keeper and sometimes watch His looks, that I may learn His will. But, oh! I have my surly fits, too—seasons when I relapse into the savage again, as though I had forgotten all. I got a hymn out of this lion, which you shall see when you come to Olney if you please me."

Then there was a fire in Olney and Newton composed a hymn on the event for his people. He sent a copy of it to his friend John Thornton. (Illustration II) When on 30 July 1776 there was an eclipse of the moon, John wrote on this occasion too and his people enjoyed the hymn, a copy of which he sent to a friend. (Illustration III) These familiar associations made the hymns very popular indeed with Newton's simple country people.

James Montgomery, a great hymn writer, observes that many of the Scriptural hymns "appear to be little skeletons of sermons, which [Newton] may have actually

preached." The fact is that Newton actually did preach many of these sermons, for we gather from his journal and letters to his friend John Thornton that it was his habit to introduce his hymn to the Great House assembly and then preach from it. Thus, he says in his journal, "Expounded my new hymn at the Great House. . . ." The writing of his hymns was really a part of the preparation of his sermons and prayer meeting talks. We are therefore not surprised that this hymn style is like his sermon style, direct, personal, almost conversational. It was part of the genius of the Evangelical Revival that the hymns sung were really designed to augment and emphasize the message of the service, so that no hearer, however simple, could leave having missed the point.

But the factor, perhaps above all others, that makes John Newton's hymns of special interest is the fact that in them we can read the story of his own life. His days at sea and in sin, his conversion, his time spent at Olney and with William Cowper—all these are easily seen in his hymns. As to the sea, there is no part of God's creation mentioned more often in the *Olney Hymns*. In hymns entitled "Paul's Voyage" and "The Disciples at Sea" one knows very well that "dreadful storms," "embark," "billows," "winds," "pilot," and "a perilous deep," are words and expressions which came directly out of sailor Newton's experiences. One can "see" in his mind's eye the ships at sea in this verse:

We may, like the ships
By tempests be tost
On perilous deeps,
But cannot be lost:

Though Satan enrages
The wind and the tide,
The promise engages,
The Lord will provide.

Sometimes John reflected on his youthful days in sin:

In evil long I took delight,
Unaw'd by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career.

Not only in the "wild career" referred to, we see something much better; his conversion:

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believ'd!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

John called this hymn we know so well, "Faith's Review and Expectation." Anyone who knows the life story of John Newton cannot sing this hymn without entering into its spirit. We see him escaping death more than once, whether at sea or on the coast of Africa. But of the "many dangers," one stands out above all others—the stormy night at sea on March 20, 1748. We live over

again with him the turning point in his life: his sense of fear, sin and guilt, the ensuing feeling of unworthiness, his feeling of relief and the first hour of spiritual sight. We feel his sense of gratitude for undeserved grace, his desire to be a Christian and his wish to reach his heavenly home. Newton, in fact, never lost his sense of wonder at God's free gift of grace "to a wretch like me." In 1795 he wrote: "It is a part of my daily employment to look back to Africa, and to retrace the path by which the Lord has led me, for about forty-seven years, since he called me from infidelity and madness. My wonderful unsought deliverance from the hopeless wickedness and misery into which I had plunged myself, taken in connexion with what he has done for me since, seem to make me say, with peculiar emphasis, 'Oh, to grace how great a debtor.' "

From the Olney hymns, says Louis Benson, "we could reconstruct the actual working of the Revival in an English parish under Evangelical leadership. . . ." This is very true. Newton challenges to revival leadership in such hymns as this :

Where are those we counted leaders,
Fill'd with zeal, and love and truth?
Old professors, tall as cedars,
Bright examples to our youth!
Some, in whom we once delighted,
We shall meet no more below;
Some, alas! we fear are blighted,
Scarce a single leaf they show.

There are numerous hymns which reflect not only the spiritual but the social aspect of the Olney awakening.

Hymns such as the one entitled "But one Loaf" illustrates the social aspect.

If five small loaves, by his command,
Could many thousands serve;
Might they not trust his gracious hand,
That they should never starve?

Hunger was all too common in Olney, but Newton must have inspired faith in the hearts in his people with the final verse of this hymn:

Be thankful for one loaf today,
Though that be all your store;
Tomorrow, if you trust and pray,
Shall timely bring you more.

Simple, but meaningful to the country people of Olney Church.

He composed hymns on the occasion of the New Year's services for his young people, and also for the Fast Day services. Often he sent copies of these hymns to his friends. (Illustrations IV, V, VI) And how often Newton called his people to repentance. The following hymn is typical:

How soon the Saviour's gracious call
Disarm'd the rage of bloody Saul.
Jesus, the knowledge of thy name,
Changes the lion to a lamb!

Zaccheus, when he knew the Lord,
What he had gain'd by wrong, restor'd;
And of the wealth he priz'd before,
He gave the half to feed the poor.

The woman who so vile had been,
When brought to weep o'er pardon'd sin,
Was from her evil ways estrang'd
And show'd that grace her heart had chang'd.

The particular aspect of Newton's friendship with Cowper which is seen in the hymns is Newton's desire to help him find mental and religious stability. It is no coincidence that the section on "Conflict" in Book III of *Olney Hymns* is the longest of that Book's eight divisions. This section is more than a group of hymns on one aspect of the Christian life. All through these hymns we see Cowper and his problem reflected. "Return, O Lord, how long," is a good example. Verses four and five are the very picture of Cowper's storm-tossed soul:

But, ah! since thou hast been away,
Nothing but trouble have I known;
And Satan marks me for his prey,
Because he sees me left alone.

My sun is hid, my comforts lost,
My graces droop, my sins revive;
Distress'd, dismay'd, and tempest-toss'd,
My soul is only just alive!

To hear God speak the words, "Fear thou not," was what Cowper wanted more than anything else, and this hymn must have been a real comfort to him:

"Fear thou not, nor be asham'd,
All thy sorrows soon shall end;
I who heav'n and earth have fram'd
Am thy husband and thy friend:
I the High and Holy One,
Israel's God, by all ador'd,
As thy Saviour will be known,
Thy Redeemer and thy Lord."

1/16

imprinted

Sunday J^y 23 June
1758

Miscellaneous Thoughts

Enquiries on an important Subject

ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ ΚΥΡΙΕ, ΒΟΗΘΕΙ ΜΟΝ ΤΗ ΑΓΙΩΣΙΑ

O Lord, the fountain of wisdom, & the
sure guide of those who depend on thee;
Thou hast promised that if we commit
our ways to Thee, thou wilt establish
them, & if we trust in thee with our
hearts, thou wilt direct our steps - Lord
I rely on this thy good word which has
been ~~long~~ tried & found faithful in eve-
ry age. Vouchsafe to direct me by thy
spirit ^{the cause of} in my present deliberations, &
do thou lead me so to determine, as may
be most agreeable to thy will, most con-
ducive to thy glory. May my heart be
divested of all prepossessions & self seek-
ing, may I be enabled to see & to follow my
duty, & may I maintain the comfortable

I. The inside cover and first page of Newton's unpublished notebook,
"Miscellaneous Thoughts and Enquiries on An Important Subject."

47 For I was spend to means forgiveness, & He was suffer to go on pardoning himself in sin. O
that I had a more a lively sense of my obligations to Grace, that I was not cut off in any such
corner, & left to perish without hope.

The hymn which I am up has the merit of being new, for I made it out of his money. It
is to the subject of my speaking to on a new evening at the Great House. I spread about the four
last Sunday at about, from Aug 3. 6. But the Congregations then & at the Great House are not
quite the same.

On the Fire at Olney. 22 Sept. 1777.

1. Wounded by day with trials & cares,
How welcome is the peaceful night!

Sweet sleep our wasted strength repairs,
And fits us for returning to the light.

2 Yet when our eyes in sleep are closed
Our rest may that we will be grieved;
To dangers being hour exposed
We neither can foresee or shun.

3 O God of the Lord, that we can sleep
A sleeping night without alarms;
That we alone our lives can keep
Secure amidst a thousand harms.

4 For given the dreams of safety past
Ungrateful we sleep have been.
The patient lay, the spoke at last,
And did the fire with the over sin.

5 The shout of fire, a dreadful cry
Imprest each heart with deep dismay;
While the fierce blaze & roaring sky
Made midnight war in the face of Day.

6 The terror & horror who can speak!
The evening sounds that fill the air!

The infant's wail, the mother's shriek
The voice of blasphemy & prayer!

7 But prayer prevailed & saved the town;
The fire who bore the Savior's name!

Woe head, & cherry stalks laid down
To damp the wind, & stop the flame.

8 O may that night be never forgot
Lord, seek on our hearts pressing foot!
Woe Olney left without a light
Queen like Solomon's must answer

"Hymn on the Lunar Eclipse" 30 July 1776.

1. The horn in which glory shone
and not a cloud to obscure
when suddenly a shade began
To intercept her light.

2. How fast away her orb is sped!

"How fast her light withereth!"
a Circle tinged with languid red,
Was all remain'd to us!

3. While many with unmeaning joy
To gaze all day work'd in vain;
Apostrophe, that smother'd
Instruction to obtain.

4. I can want my thankful heart slips
Unite in praise to Thee;
And meditate on thine Eclipse
In sad Germanese.

Yes there is a better world, when our Sun shall no more go down over the
The horn with brow is shining— Or rather both horn & horn shall be needful, for the
Lod himself shall be the Everlasting Unclouded Light of his people. Or how different
is the land we are going to from this wilderness which we now occupy.
What a wonder of our lost prospects to all! Thomson I remain

Prayer of 6. August 76.

Dearest Sir
Your most obed^t & affec^t
Servant John Newton

1. I may the power which melts the rock
Be felt by all assembled here;
Or else our service will but mock
The God whom we profess to fear.
- 2 Lord while thy judgments shake the land
Thy peoples eyes are fix'd on Thee;
We own thy just uplifted hand
Which thousands cannot, will not, see.
- 3 How long hast Thou bestow'd thy care
On this indulg'd ungrateful spot!
While other Nations, far & near
Have envy'd & admir'd our lot.
- 4 How peace & liberty have dwelt,
The glorious Gospel brightly shone,
And oft our enemies have felt
Ther God has made our cause his own.

I rec'd an affectionate letter from
declining age, & that he should soon be un-
His letter expresses humility & confidence
hope the number of Gospel Ministers over
them twenty fold. We join in best wishes
wish me to mention hers to you

Olney 4. 19. Dec. 76

day

But Ah! both Heaven & Earth have heard
his vile requital of his love;
whom little children he has reared,
bels against his goodness prove.
his grace despised, his power defied,
legions of the blackest crimes,
of sinners not Lust & pride,
signs that mark the present times.
The Lord displeased has raised his rod
Ah! when an now the faithful few,
who tremble for the ark of God,
and know what Israel ought to do!
and, ^{hear} ~~see~~ thy people every where
who meet to mourn confess & pray,
the Nation, & thy Churches spare
and at thy wrath be turned away.

Stonehouse of Bristol. The Minister dismissed
to preach, ~~but~~ He has not yet given it up
to Lord. Mr. Roquet I find is gone. But
upon the whole. May thunder increase
Mr. Thornton Mr. Unwin attend
I am Dearst Sir
Yours most obliged & obed^t. Servant
John Newton

A New years thought & prayer

Time by moments shall away
First the hour, & then the day!
Small the daily loss appears
But it soon amounts to years.
Thus another year is flown,
Now it is no more our own
(If it brought us or promised good)
Than the years before the flood.

2 But surely none of us forget
It has left us smitten in debt,
Favors from the Lord receive,
And that have his Spirit is given,
Marked by an unerring hand
In his book recorded stand;
Who can tell the vast amount
Placed to each of our account?

3 Happy the believing soul!
Christ for you has paid the whole.
With thy crown the debt is large
Paid a full discharge.

But poor canst thou ever say
What can you to justice pay?
Tremble at what is ~~the~~ past
Into prison you be cast.

4 With you still in case the score
Still be canst canst as before?

O forbid it, Gracious Lord!

Taught their spirits by thy word

Now in mercy to them show

What a mighty debt they owe;

All their unbelief outside,

Let them find forgiveness too

5 I spend to see another year

Let thy blessing meet us here.

Come thy dying work revive,

Make thy drops in garden thrive

Sun of righteousness arise!

Warm our hearts & bless our eyes.

Let our prayers thy bowels move

Make this year a time of love.

Before Sermon

1 The Lord who once to Israel spoke
From Sinai top in fire & smoke:
In gentler strains of Gospel grace
Invites us now to seek his face.

2 No awful terrors clothe his brow
He speaks in love from Zion now:
It is the voice of Jesus' blood
Calling poor wanderers home to God.

3 The Holy Moses quail'd & fear'd
When Sinai's thundering voice he heard;
But reigning grace in accents mild
Speaks to the sinner as a child.

4 Hark! How from Calvary it sounds,
From the Red corners shed thy wounds,
Pardon & Grace, I freely give
Poor sinner, look to me & live.

5 What other arguments can move
The heart that slighted a Saviour's love?

Yet the Almighty power constrain

This matchless love is preached in vain.

6 O Saviour, let that power be felt,
And cause each stony heart to melt!

This night impress upon our hearts

The light & force of Gospel truth.

7 With the New Year, may they begin
To live to thee, & die to sin!

To enter by the narrow way

That leads to everlasting day.

8 How shall they escape thy presence dear
When as a Judge thou shalt appear;

When slighted love to wrath shall turn

And the whole Earth like Sinai burn!

COLLECTION

OF

PSALMS and HYMNS,

FROM

VARIOUS AUTHORS:

FOR THE USE OF

SERIOUS AND DEVOUT CHRISTIANS

OF EVERY

DENOMINATION.

A NEW EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

This is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.

If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.

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HYMN 355.

No more, believers, mourn your loss;
But if you are the Lord's,
Resign to them who know him now.
Such joys as earth affords.

HYMN 355.

SATURDAY EVENING.

SAFELY thro' another week
God has brought us on our way,
Let us now a blessing seek
On th' approaching sabbath-day:
Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest.

Mercies multiply'd each hour
Thro' the week our praise demand;
Guarded by almighty power,
Fed and guarded by his hand,
Tho' ungrateful we have been,
Only made returns of praise.

While we pray for pard'ning grace
In the dear Redeemer's name,
Show thy reconciled face,
Shine away our sin and shame
From our worldly cares let free,
May we rest this night with thee.

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HYMN 356.

When the morn' shall bid us rise,
May we feel thy presence near,
May thy glory meet our eyes,
When we in thy house appear;
There afford us, Lord, a taste
Of our everlasting feast.

May the gospel's joyful sound
Conquer sinners, comfort saints,
Make the fruits of grace abound,
Bring relief for all our wants;
Thus let all our sabbaths prove,
Till we join the church above.

HYMN 356.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

THE church a garden is
In which believers stand,
Like ornamental trees
Planted by God's own hand
His Spirit waters all their roots,
And ev'ry branch abounds with fruits.

But other trees there are
In this inclosure grow,
Which tho' they promise fair,
Have only leaves to show;
No fruits of grace are on them found,
They are but cumberers of the ground.

Q 2

Dear Sir,

I have been hurt ^{by} 2 or 3 by letters directed to Dr. Newton. I beg you to inform my friends in Scotland as they come in your way, that after a little time, if any letters come to me, addressed to Dr. Newton I shall be obliged to send them back unopened. I know no such person, I never shall, I never will, by the Grace of God.

Do not think I am displeased with you, or any of my kind friends, who mean me kindness & honour by such an address. I only beg for my peace sake, that it may not be repeated.

I have been informed that a College in America, I think in ~~the~~ New Jersey, has given me the Honorary degree of Doctor. So far as this mark of their favour, indicates a regard to the Gospel truths which I profess, I am much pleased with it. But as to the title itself I renounce it heartily; nor would I willingly be known by it, if all the Universities in Europe conferred it upon me. My youthful years were spent in Africa, & I ought to take my degrees (if I take any) from thence. Shall such a compound of misery & mischief, as I then was, be called Doctor? Surely not.

I thank you for some pamphlets I lately received. I have not had time to read them all; but doubt not I shall like them all, but that which I ~~have~~ read - The Dialogue. I cannot say I approve either the manner or the end of it. I am hurt, when Gospel truths

When the large-hearted Olney pastor sings to the depressed Cowper of God's love and the assurance of salvation, Newton proves himself a most noble and patient friend.

How much more could be said of the hymns of Newton! Nearly every modern hymnbook contains some of his hymns. Some of the best known are "May the grace of Christ our Saviour" (a little benediction), "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," "Amazing grace! How sweet the sound," "Come, my soul, thy suit prepare," "Glorious things of thee are spoken," and "Safely through another week." These and many more have served to bless mankind, to give comfort, and to bring people to the feet of Christ. Thank God for the hymns of John Newton!

"My Race at Olney Is Nearly Finished"

Towards the end of 1779 John Thornton offered Newton the living of St. Mary Woolnoth in London. The results of his labors while rector of this Church were as remarkable—and perhaps more so—than the results of his

Olney efforts. It was during that period that Newton made the acquaintance of, and became the spiritual advisor to, Hannah More, William Wilberforce and others. Also during this time he published his largest collection of sermons, *Messiah*, as well as other books and pamphlets, many of which were circulated widely. Thus Newton became famous as a mouthpiece of Evangelical religion, and in 1792 he was offered the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, but declined, saying that his "youthful years were spent in Africa and I ought to take my degree (if I take any) from there. Shall such a compound of misery and mischief, as I then was, be called DOCTOR? Surely not." (Illustration VII) Modesty was always one of John Newton's obvious characteristics.

But back in 1779 when he was offered the St. Mary's Church, Newton found himself in a difficult situation. He loved his people at Olney; he had given them almost sixteen years of faithful service; indeed these were years of untiring service, for he gave himself one hundred per cent to his task. It was hard, too, to leave his dear friend William Cowper, for Newton wrote in his diary, "Dear Mrs. Unwin and Mr. Cowper feel concerned that we must be parted."

John loved the quiet of the country; he took long walks on which he meditated, mulling over in his mind the problems of his people and the hymns and sermons on which he was working. The green fields, the hedgerows, the trees, the fresh smell of the countryside—all this intrigued him and he really hated to leave it all. His writings are full of his love of the country; he once wrote that God was "more easily perceptible in the retirement of rural scenes

than in the hurry and noise of London." He thought Cowper's observation that "God made the Country, and Man made the Town," to be a most accurate expression.

But John Newton determined there would be no morbidness about his departure. By nature he was an optimist and exhorted Christians to a positive attitude toward life. "Cheerfulness is no sin, nor is there any grace in a solemn cast of countenance," was the kind of thing he was in the habit of saying. He was true to his own principles and London proved to be a highly fruitful experience.

So it was that John made his decision to leave the lovely Olney Church, situated so beautifully by the River Ouse, with its people and his friends of the little country town. Some to be sure wanted him to leave—that is inevitable—but many another expressed personal loss. William Cowper, after Newton had left for London, wrote pathetically: "The vicarage house became a melancholy object as soon as Mr. Newton left it. As I walked in the garden this evening I saw the smoke issue from the study chimney, and said to myself, that used to be a sign that Mr. Newton was there: but it is so no longer. . . . Such are my thoughts about the matter. Others are more deeply affected, and by more weighty considerations, having been many years the objects of a ministry which they had reason to account themselves happy in the possession of."

But John Newton left for London with fresh enthusiasm for a new task, and he wrote his friend William Bull that "My race at Olney is nearly finished," and he added with a twinkle, "I am about to form a connexion for life with one Mary Woolnoth, a reputed London saint, in Lombard Street."

"My Sphere of Service Is Extremely Enlarged"

By the time John arrived in London toward the close of 1779, the evangelicals had already established themselves rather well. Romaine was the respected rector of St. Anne's, Blackfriars; De Coetlogen was chaplain of the Lock Hospital; the Whitefield trustees were in charge of the Tottenham Court Chapel and Tabernacle; Lady Huntingdon's large chapel was well attended; and John Wesley, now an old man, preached in the City Road Chapel. There were a number of other chapels and meeting places in the big city where evangelical ministers were preaching, and John Newton says, "I should suppose that the churches, chapels, etc., which are open on the Lord's day, for those whom the world calls Methodists, as distinct from Dissenters, will contain thirty thousand people, and in general they are all crowded."

This is the London into which Newton came to work. Romaine had been the first evangelical rector in the city and now Newton was the second. The Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, which Newton came to pastor, was located in the heart of eighteenth century London: it was in the immediate neighborhood of the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, and many of the leading places of business. There were only one hundred houses in Newton's parish, but St. Mary's was an important church. The Lord Mayor of London made an annual visit to St. Mary's. Wealthy merchants, who lived over their counting houses (as was the eighteenth century custom), shopkeepers, and

artisans, as well as visitors from the surrounding communities, all attended Newton's church. Newton was not like the average London minister who, in Rosomond Bayne-Powell's words, "did not . . . go out into the hedges and compel men to come in. The very poor," continues Bayne-Powell, "scarcely ever entered the Established Church. They were ragged, dirty, verminous, evil smelling. Church-goers in their Sunday best would have looked at them askance, beadles might have thrust them out." But there were a few clergymen "whose missionary zeal stands out in fine contrast to what Gibbon called 'the fat slumbers of the Church.' " John Newton was one of these out-of-the-ordinary ministers: he did not waste valuable time condemning the Catholics, Deists, and Methodists; nor did he preach a gospel geared only to meet the needs of his rich merchants, for he was never happier than when he saw the poor sitting at his feet.*

John Newton's approach to his work in the London period was considerably different from that of the Olney period. There was no "Great House" in London; Newton conducted his prayer and Bible study meetings in the houses of his parishioners, in his own home, and in the church he had one service during the week (the one on Wednesday evening). Three weekly gatherings in the manse were designed largely for Newton's friends in the ministry. He limited himself to one monthly and three weekly sanctuary services, but he preached often for his colleagues both in and out of London. Unlike his work with the youth in Olney, in London he contacted the young people not so much by means of regular meetings for them,

* Rosomond Bayne-Powell, *Eighteenth-Century London Life*, pp. 289-90.

as by meeting them informally in his own home, and in the homes of his people. He did continue his custom of an annual sermon to youth, and many young people joined the adults in the regular sanctuary services. He also continued to visit school children.

While the spiritual and social awakening in the Olney period was limited largely to the Olney community and surrounding towns, the awakening of the London period had national and even international significance. During the London period Newton did more house preaching, made more preaching tours, influenced a greater number of preachers, and became more widely known as a mouth-piece of the Evangelical Movement. He saw results of his association with the members of a little group called the Eclectic Society in terms of world missions, and his friendship with Claudius Buchanan also resulted in missionary activity. Pastor Newton's influence on Wilberforce and Hannah More led in considerable measure to certain social reforms, including the Abolition of Slavery.

It is no wonder Newton wrote of his new challenge in London like this: "My sphere of service is extremely enlarged, and my sphere of usefulness likewise."

“Attracted the Poor at Once”

On Sunday, December 19, 1779, Newton preached his first sermon in the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth. He entitled his sermon, “The Subject and Temper of the Gospel Ministry” and his text was, “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). In this sermon he told what he meant by gospel truth, and declared that it must be preached, after the pattern of his text, in the spirit of love. This declaration was to have significant meaning and far-reaching results for Newton’s ministry, for he had in his congregation people of many denominations and of varying social classes, and these people needed to learn to love each other as brothers in the Kingdom. “. . . Churchmen and Dissenters, Calvinists and Arminians, Methodists and Moravians, now and then, I believe, Papists [Catholics] and Quakers, sit quietly to hear me . . .” H. C. G. Moule has observed that in London Newton “*attracted the poor at once*, and, more gradually, the wealthier people. . . .” It was even more difficult for the rich to learn to sit in the same pew with the poor, than for the Calvinists to learn to sit with the Arminians, but under Newton’s skillful ministry these walls of partition were broken down.

Great crowds came to hear this remarkable man and there were in fact so many strangers that the regular worshippers complained that their seats were either occupied or that they could not get to them because of the crowd in the aisle. The parishioners spoke to the churchwarden about the situation, and he in turn took the problem to Newton. Newton confided in his wife that the warden “proposed with many apologies my letting another clergy-

man preach now and then for me; hinted that it should be no expense to me, and thought that if it was uncertain whether I preached or no the people would not throng the church so much." Needless to say, Newton refused to put this plan into action and the crowds continued to come.

But at first Newton had a difficult time securing the attendance of his people at a weekly service. In discussing the problem with his friend William Bull, he said in a letter: ". . . I am going to read prayers at Mary Woolnoth's, if there shall be any people come—frequently there is not one. I try them a while, and if they do not attend, I shall give up the Friday prayer-day and preach a sermon on Wednesday." Before Newton's first year at St. Mary's was completed, he had begun his Wednesday preaching service and later in his London ministry he writes his friend Bull that, "The church is often full on a Wednesday . . ."

Near the outset of his London ministry, he also began a Sunday evening Bible study. He devoted a long series of Sunday evenings to a study of the history of Israel. "In January, 1788," he writes a friend, reviewing his work in these Sunday evening discussions over a number of years—"In January, 1788, I began the history of Israel, for a subject on Sunday evening, in and from Egypt, through the wilderness. Last Sunday I took leave of them from Joshua xxiv.25, having seen them safely fixed in the promised land. Thus the Lord has spared me to finish what I began more than seven years ago."

It was this kind of consistent expounding of the Scriptures that resulted in the spiritual development of St. Mary's congregation. Young and old alike profited from

Newton's preaching and teaching. Newton speaks often of the seriousness of his congregation, and as his ministry progressed an increasing number were spiritually awakened. He writes to a friend about his new curate, Mr. Gunn, and adds, "I have reason to hope that the Lord owns both his labours and mine. The church is crammed, the hearers are attentive; we often hear of new inquirers, especially young people, and I know of no gross miscarriages among those who profess the gospel. Last time we had more than three hundred communicants." The reference to the young people is significant. Newton refers often to them in his letters and had them constantly on his mind and in his heart. On one occasion Newton came to the rescue of a young man who had been falsely accused of crime. The youth was freed through the efforts of John Thornton—a close friend of Newton's—at Newton's request. Subsequently the young man became a constant worshiper at St. Mary Woolnoth Church. This is but one example of the rector's concern for his youth, for under his careful guidance and loving kindness a fine group of young people found Christ as Lord and Saviour and grew to maturity in St. Mary's Church.

For a time, Newton had difficulty communicating to his wealthy parishioners. He was finally obliged to send them a printed statement, requesting that they be faithful in church attendance. He declared that because he had been called a "methodist," many of his people were refusing to hear him. To call one a "methodist" in the eighteenth century was often to reflect on integrity, and it frequently indicated that the accused minister had "disgraced" himself by associating with the lower social classes! Method-

ism had become the sign of welcome to the outcast. Its doctrine of sin was considered vulgar by the upper classes, but applicable to the poor, who were sinners indeed! In the religious thought of John Newton, however, *all* men were sinners, and except for the grace of God no man was morally superior to another. It took a long time for this truth to dawn on the eighteenth century. It fact it only took root in that century, but of the places where it did take root the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth is a noble example. Cried Newton in one sermon, every child "whether of a prince or a pauper . . . is of equal importance" in the sight of God. Under such preaching the people developed socially and spiritually. They gradually awakened to the fact that all men are one, and that all need God.

“I Spoke Nearly As Long and As Loud As If I Had Been in a Church”

How can religion be made a family affair? This was a question Newton was vitally concerned with, and he was tireless in his efforts to get Christianity into homes. In his own household he expounded the Scriptures both morning and evening; if he had house guests—as he so often did—they were expected to join in this family worship.

It is amazing indeed how Newton got his way into homes. At a Mrs. Wilberforce's he delivered a series of lectures on the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the same series was presented at a Mr. Neale's of St. Paul's Churchyard. On these occasions friends were invited to hear what the person had to say. During the French Revolution Newton and Neale started a prayer meeting in the latter's home.

Outside London, Mr. Newton made the acquaintance of Walter Taylor of Portswood Green, near Southampton, and of Dr. Thomas Ring of Reading. During Newton's London ministry, Portswood became the place of his annual summer retreat. Now the churches of Southampton were sometimes not open to Newton—he was a radical and a “methodist”—but this by no means stopped Newton from preaching the Gospel on his vacation; Walter Taylor's house was always open to Newton for preaching purposes. Newton often preached three evenings each week in the house of Taylor, who “made accommodations

to receive about 300 people and we are sometimes full," said Newton. He saw rewarding effects of his work among Taylor's friends, but especially among the people of the nearby villages who "seem willing to listen to the gospel."

In 1793 the London rector was introduced to Dr. and Mrs. Ring by their mutual friend, Ambrose Serle. At the time of his introduction, Newton stayed with the Rings for a few days and conducted services in their home. About forty were in attendance. At future periods, Newton returned to visit the Rings and hold services, and there are numerous references in Newton's correspondence to his work at Reading and with the Rings. Of his visit to Reading in 1797, Newton writes his friend William Bull that "I never preached so often in an equal space; five times in the church; twice in Mr. Young's school; every morning at Mr. Ring's, and every evening in a large room of one or other of our friends. I call it all preaching, for the rooms were crowded, and I spoke nearly as long and as loud as if I had been in a church."

John Newton was peculiarly fitted to the task of house preaching. He was a ready and skillful conversationalist, and found no difficulty in adapting his preaching to the environment of the home. The chief effect of Newton's house preaching and Scriptural exposition was the promotion of personal and family religion.

"The Rushing of Many Waters"

Newton's letters and journal are alive with his interest in the spread of the Gospel. Newton could not take a vacation without making a chance for preaching; he could not go on a business trip without bearing witness to his Lord and Saviour. Actually, he found himself going on all sorts of preaching tours, and during the course of his active ministry in Olney and London he went on no less than twenty-four major tours and many minor ones. Everywhere he went he was well received by the Evangelicals. He speaks of going to London while he was still in Olney and preaching "not less than . . . fourteen times." In March of 1775 he spent a week in Leicestershire where he was "engaged nearly the whole time in various religious exercises, preaching to crowded congregations, especially at Leicester." During part of the month of October one year he "preached and expounded between thirty and forty times," and apparently with good response from the people. Whenever and wherever he could, he spoke: He once preached in the house of a knight and a lady, Sir Charles and Lady Middleton; another time he preached to Hannah More's Sunday School children at Shipham. Of one summer's vacation he confessed, "I preached . . . in ten churches, nine of them in different places, besides many house-preachings." Two summers later, he spent one of his five vacation weeks lecturing twice a day (morning and evening) at the house of Dr. and Mrs. Ring. In the autumn of 1797 he visited Reading where he says, "I never preached so often in a single space" of time!

When he was in Leicestershire in 1779, a great crowd

came to hear him, and he writes in a most fascinating way about this experience in a letter to Mrs. Unwin: "You can form an idea of the rushing of many waters when a bank breaks in the fens. Such was the rushing into Creation Church on Wednesday when the doors were opened. The waves soon overflowed the floor, mounted the gallery, covered the windows, walls, and beams. What the church could not contain diffused itself around the walls, so that it was an island surrounded with a sea of heads. We had a good opportunity, I hope." The response of the people was not always so unanimous, but many who did come to hear Newton were awakened spiritually and morally, and he had the pleasure of witnessing the growth of his converts throughout the years as he returned periodically to these places.

Over and above his tours, he often spent a day or even a few days in villages near Olney or London, as the case might be, visiting the people, organizing them into prayer and Bible study groups, and preaching in their houses and churches.

A study of Newton's preaching tours brings to light something of his contribution to the spread of evangelical religion in the eighteenth century, and his relation to the Evangelical Movement. He was in fact an integral part of the Movement. He visited and preached for such men as Dr. Conyers (brother-in-law of John Thornton), Edwards of Leeds, Scott of Cleckheaton, Venn of Huddersfield, Romaine, Talbot of St. Giles, Reading, Robinson of Leicester, Dr. Ford of Melton, Cadagon of Reading, Simeon of Cambridge, and a host of other evangelicals. He not only preached for these men, but they in turn preached

for him. These evangelicals all worked toward the accomplishment of common ends: *the salvation of souls and the moral reformation of their age*. To a remarkable degree they witnessed the achievement of these goals, and John Newton's preaching tours, though they were not as extensive as Whitefields, Wesley's, and some others, figured significantly in the attainment of these goals.

"Parsons, Parsonets, and Parsonettas"

Our hero never lost his keen desire to help his fellow ministers, and while he was rector in London he contributed very much to the moulding of the lives of a rising group of warmhearted, evangelical ministers. Newton preached a beautiful sermon called "The Great Shepherd," in which he pled with the clergy to serve their people, "not acting as a 'lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock.' Not preaching 'himself,' perverting his sacred office to the purposes of ambition or vain glory, or the acquisition of wealth; but preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn sinners

from the error of their ways." In a word, the goal of the preacher must be "the salvation of souls."

How often did John Newton meet with his fellows in intimate discussion groups! In fact, Newton was a foundation member of a little ministerial club called the Eclectic Society. The Society's first meeting in 1783 was composed of three clergymen and one layman. John Newton was the eldest, and his younger friends, Richard Cecil and Henry Foster, had joined him along with Eli Bates, the mutual friend of the other three. Richard Cecil, later to be Newton's biographer, owed much to Newton who was the chief of his London friends in the ministry. The little Society grew rapidly and before long there were twelve or more members, with as many country members who joined the group when they were in the city. The Eclectics met for the purpose of discussing theological problems and ways and means of promoting evangelical religion.

Newton loved to have ministers in his home. Josiah Bateman in his book, *The Life of the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson, D.D.*, tells us that on Saturday evenings, several of the London ministers met at the home of Newton, and on Tuesdays in the evening Newton received (to use his own words) "Parsons, Parsonets, and Parsonettas." Then there were the famous breakfast meetings in the manse; they were really breakfast *parties*, and they were held on Thursday mornings. What great fun these ministers did have telling their stories and laughing heartily; but underneath the fun and laughter there was a pervading seriousness which influenced such men as Daniel Wilson and Jay of Bath, both of whom were to become tireless workers in the spread of the Gospel.

John Newton spent a great deal of his time writing to his friends in the ministry. There was in Scotland a young man by the name of John Campbell; Newton took an interest in him and wrote a good many letters to him. Campbell confesses his debt to the London Rector in a letter to the Countess of Leven: "Mr. Newton I make my chief counsellor, almost indeed my only one in matters of great importance, and I always found him the best." Campbell had suffered a period of religious doubting, and Newton proved to be a real help to the young man and later the London rector gave excellent advice on matters of ministerial conduct. Campbell was so much impressed with the advice he received in Newton's letters, that he published a book of these letters after John Newton's death.

In addition to letter-writing, breakfast parties, the Eclectic Society, and what have you, John Newton wanted to set up a more direct method of influencing young ministerial candidates. In 1782 some Congregationalists asked him to write a plan for establishing an institution for the study of divinity. Newton responded enthusiastically—perhaps this was the more direct method of influence—and in 1784 published *A Plan of Academical Preparation for the Ministry*. In this pamphlet, he set forth the theological position the academy would hold, spoke of the necessity of training warmhearted preachers and made reference to the matter of a geographical location of the "seminary." He said something, too, about the subjects that ought to be taught. Subsequently this academy was actually organized and it was known as the Newport Pagnel Evangelical Institution for the Education of Young

Men for the Christian Ministry, a name somewhat longer than we give our institutions of higher learning today! The superintendent was Newton's close friend, William Bull. The London parson was able to secure grants for sending a number of young men to this school. It is interesting that one of the textbooks was Newton's collection of sermons called *Messiah*, and Bull wrote Newton that his book was "read three times a week by the students in turn," and later the superintendent wrote, "We have just finished your *Messiah*, and I hope have been edified and benefited by it . . ." The "seminary" functioned until 1848, when it merged with Cheshunt College. Prior to the merger, over eighty students had passed through its halls.

So it is obvious that Newton did all he could to encourage his "Parsons, Parsonets, and Parsonettas." He continued his interest in Thomas Scott when Scott moved to London. John Venn, Charles Simeon, and Henry Martyn are among others who found a good advisor in Newton. He was a close friend of the well-known preacher, Romaine, and a pallbearer at Charles Wesley's funeral, at Charles Wesley's request. Through Newton's little devotional book *Cardiphonia*, a John Aikman, who later entered the Christian ministry, was converted. And we could go on naming those who came under the shadow of Newton's influence—there were Gunn and Benamor, Newton's assistants, who learned much at the feet of their senior minister, and of Benamor, Newton once said, "I had been chiefly instrumental in bringing him forward." Of the younger men Newton influenced, we may say with Marcus Loane, that around him "or within reach of his letters, a new generation of clergy was rising up in those

memorable years who were in debt to him for their spiritual encouragement and whose lives of noble service were to be of untold significance for their church and country.”*

“The Lord Who Sends Thee Hence”

Claudius Buchanan, a young irreligious Scot who was working in a London law office, received a letter from his sister—it all happened in the year 1791—and the letter read, “My mother has heard much of Mr. Newton, Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, and wishes that you would cultivate an acquaintance with him, if it is in your power.” Subsequently he went to hear the rector preach and afterwards wrote him a letter: “On the receipt of my mother’s letter, I immediately reflected that I had heard there was a crowded audience at a church in Lombard Street. Thither I accordingly went the next Sunday evening; and when you spoke, I thought I heard the words of eternal life: I listened with avidity, and wished that you had preached till midnight.” “. . . Wished that you had

* Marcus L. Loane, *Oxford and the Evangelical Succession*, p. 125.

preached till midnight"—how typical that reaction was of those who heard Newton for the first time! But Buchanan's responsiveness went even deeper: "Tomorrow is the day you have appointed for a sermon to young people. Will you remember *me*, and speak some suitable word, that . . . may reach my heart?"

This letter stimulated Newton to action and he arranged an interview with Buchanan. The young man was immediately taken by the charm of the London rector and he wrote his mother that he "experienced such a happy hour as I ought not to forget. If he had been my father, he could not have expressed more solicitude for my welfare." It is no wonder Buchanan confessed that "Mr. Newton encouraged me much," for the kindly rector gave him a copy of the *Authentic Narrative*, the story of Newton's life, and a book or two of his letters too. He "begged my careful perusal of them before I saw him again, and gave me a general invitation to breakfast with him when and as often as I could."

This interview was but the beginning of a close friendship. Claudius now began to hear Newton regularly, and on one occasion, when Newton was away from London for a period, he wrote: "I long much for your return to St. Mary Woolnoth. I was driven about from place to place; and, like Noah's dove, I fear I shall find no rest for the sole of my foot till my return to the ark."

Early in their friendship the young convert questioned his advisor about the possibility of going into the ministry. He was encouraged, and about this time introduced to Henry Thornton, the son of Newton's close friend John, who suggested that Buchanan might be able to secure an

early ordination provided the young candidate were willing to accept the chaplaincy of the colony of Sierra Leone. Following Newton's advice, Buchanan agreed to this plan, but complications ensued and the ordination did not take place at this time. But this was all to the good, for now Henry Thornton offered to send the young man to the divinity hall at his own expense.

During Claudius' years at the University—he went to Cambridge—the London pastor kept in close touch by post. In time the student was offered the assistantship at St. Mary's and he replied that "If the Lord will, I should be well pleased to enter his service under your advice and example."

In the meantime, Newton and his Eclectic friends had been discussing foreign missions. While the Danes, Moravians, Wesleyans, and others outside the Established Church were active in foreign missionary work, the Church of England was doing practically no work of this kind.* Charles Simeon, who kept in close contact with the London evangelicals and who was a friend of John Newton, was the first to turn his attention to India. He worked through the chaplains of the East India Company, and was responsible for persuading many of the young evangelicals at Cambridge to apply for chaplaincies. Through the influence of Charles Grant, an evangelical layman, appointments for Simeon's men were secured. Claudius Buchanan was a student at Cambridge while Simeon was there. It was at this period that Buchanan began to think about India. At the opening of Buchanan's

* G. R. Balleine. *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England*, observed that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge were limited in their spheres of endeavor. p. 160.

third and last year of studies, Newton, with the backing of Henry Thornton and Charles Grant, made the first proposal to him of a trip to India. Plans for India, however, did not mature at this time but Buchanan continued to think seriously about missionary work in that foreign land.

At the time of his graduation from University, there still being no definite arrangements for foreign service, Claudius Buchanan accepted Newton's invitation to become curate at St. Mary Woolnoth. What a happy occasion was the ordination service which took place September 29, 1795! And even more challenging was the actual work with John Newton. Newton himself was happy with his assistant's work and said that he "suited me and my people exactly . . ." He worked for St. Mary's for the rest of the year, but early in 1796 Henry Thornton and Grant secured for him an appointment as chaplain of the East India Company. On July 3, he preached his final sermon at St. Mary's, and Newton, though proud indeed of his protegee, confessed that he was a little reluctant to give him up because "he was to me as a right hand."

Sometime after Buchanan had been abroad, he wrote Charles Grant that Newton's "pious affection and fatherly counsel" were in no small part responsible for his position with the East India Company. But how very proud John Newton must have been when, in 1801, Claudius Buchanan became Vice Provost and Professor of Classics in the College of Fort William, in India.

This story of Newton's influence on Buchanan points up the London rector's interest in foreign missions. Buchanan was actually one of the earliest missionaries of the

modern missionary movement, for William Carey—the father of the modern missionary movement—had been on the mission field only four years when Buchanan left the shores of England. With the members of the Eclectic Society, Newton had discussed the possibility of missionary work in Africa, and he had taken an interest in the forming of the London Missionary Society. As a direct result of one of the Eclectic Society meetings, the Church Missionary Society was formed on April 12, 1799, and Newton was on that founding committee.

And who can count the number of missionary-minded people Newton influenced? Thomas Scott, his spiritual son, was the first secretary of the Church Missionary Society and a teacher of missionary candidates. Scott also was responsible to a great degree for building the religious thought of the father of modern missions, William Carey, for in 1821 Carey wrote, "If there be anything of the Word of God in my soul, I owe much of it to [Scott's] preaching, when I first set out in the ways of the Lord." John Campbell who was influenced by Newton, was sent to South Africa to visit the work of the London Missionary Society and he traveled through most of the counties of England pleading the cause of Christian missions. Campbell became a director of the Edinburgh Missionary Society. Another example of Newton's influence is Daniel Wilson who became bishop of Calcutta. William Wilberforce—Newton's convert—was responsible for the appointment of Richard Johnson to the chaplaincy of Botany Bay. On the occasion of Johnson's appointment, the London pastor wrote a poem entitled "Omicron to Johnson." "Omicron" was Newton's pen name.

OMICRON TO JOHNSON,
Going to Botany Bay

*The Lord, who sends thee hence, will be thine aid;
In vain at thee the lion, Danger, roars;
His arm and love shall keep thee undismayed
On tempest-tossed seas, and savage shores.*

*Go, bear the Saviour's name to lands unknown,
Tell to the Southern world His wondrous grace;
And energy Divine thy words shall own,
And draw their untaught hearts to seek His face.*

*Many in quest of gold or empty fame
Would compass earth, or venture near the poles;
But how much nobler thy reward and aim—
To spread His praise, and win immortal souls!*

This simple poem is really a summary of Newton's belief and feelings about Christian missions.

“The Reformation of My Country’s Manners”

William Wilberforce was one of the leading evangelical laymen of his day, and his interest in religion is to be traced to his early contact with the evangelicals themselves. At the age of seven, William was sent to the grammar school at Hull where Joseph and Isaac Milner—leading evangelicals—were his teachers. When his father died in 1768, the lad was transferred to the care of his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. William Wilberforce. Now the aunt, sister of Newton’s friend John Thornton, was an admirer of Whitefield’s preaching and in definite sympathy with the “Methodists.” It is easy to see how William profited from this evangelical influence.

At the age of twelve, William returned to live in his mother’s home, but alas, it was there he lost his interest in religion. Some years later he entered St. John’s College, Cambridge, where he resolved to enter public life and upon graduation he canvassed his town in an effort to win the election as representative in Parliament. He won the election and began his duties in 1781.

Three years later—in 1784—Wilberforce took a Continental trip with his old grammar school teacher Isaac Milner, who had visited Newton in Olney and to whom Newton had addressed the ninth of *Omicron’s Letters*, a little book which enjoyed a rather wide reading. During their trip, Mr. Milner and William read together and discussed Philip Doddridge’s book, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. These discussions made a deep im-

pression on William and he afterwards wrote, "By degrees I imbibed [Milner's] sentiments," but these, he confessed, "long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart."

Returning to England he underwent a severe religious struggle. He spent much time in contemplation and in reading the New Testament. He announced to his friends, including his close acquaintance William Pitt, his new views on the significance of religion, but still he had many doubts. He thought of taking his problems to Newton, who was a friend of his aunt, and a friend of John Thornton and Isaac Milner. But if his friends should discover that he had counseled with the evangelical rector of Lombard Street, Wilberforce was sure to be called an "enthusiast" or "radical." He debated with himself about seeing Newton: "Resolved again about Mr. Newton," he wrote in his Journal. "It may do good; he will pray for me; his experience may enable him to direct me to new grounds of humiliation, and it is that only which I can perceive God's Spirit employ to any effect. It can do no harm, for that is a scandalous objection which keeps occurring to me, that if ever my sentiments change, I shall be ashamed of having done it. . . ."

Two days later—it was on December fourth—he wrote a letter to John Newton, asking for an interview. William confesses that all his arguments against seeing Newton have had their foundation in pride. He delivered the letter in person, and an appointment was made for the following Wednesday. When the day came the young parliamentarian walked "about the Square once or twice before I could persuade myself [to call] upon old Newton. . . ."

In the interview Newton told him that since the time they had first met, when Wilberforce was but a boy, he had not ceased to pray for him. How this impressed Wilberforce! Afterwards he wrote in his diary: "... Was much affected in conversing with him—something very pleasing and unaffected in him. . . . On the whole he encouraged me—though got nothing new from him, as how could I, except a good hint, that he never found it answer to dispute. . . . When I came away I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God." In a word, the London rector advised William to stay with his job in Parliament, to stay within his circle of friends and to keep his Prime Minister—William Pitt—in his confidence, while at the same time holding his religious beliefs.

Wilberforce had further consultations with Newton, went to hear him preach, read the *Authentic Narrative* (Newton's exciting autobiography) and some other books Newton had suggested. The Rector of Lombard Street continued to encourage him for he knew what this young politician—influential as he was—could do for the cause of religion. The Wesleys and Whitefield may have done much to raise the moral standards of the common man, but their influence had not yet penetrated to the ruling class or to fashionable society to any great extent. To win Wilberforce, Newton reasoned, would be a major step in contacting the upper classes.

Newton did win his man, for by January 12, 1786, William Wilberforce had made his final decision, which is marked off in his diary with these words: "Newton staid—Thornton Astell surprised us together on the common in

the evening. Expect to hear myself now universally given out to be a methodist: may God grant it may be said with truth." What a difference the spring of 1786 made in the life of this young man; he returned to his work a transformed man in Christ Jesus.

The conversion of William Wilberforce is an important event in the history of the Evangelical Movement and indeed in English social history. In 1787 he wrote in his journal that "God has set before me as my object *the reformation of [my country's] manners.*" Accordingly one of the first evils he attacked was slavery. This was a most difficult task, for the eighteenth century mind was morally insensible to the problem. But Wilberforce crusaded for his cause and in May of 1787 a first significant step was made in the organization of The Society for the Abolition of Slavery, the proceedings of which were directed by Wilberforce himself. Newton did his part by preaching against slavery—and how he could make those sermons live with his vivid stories!—and by writing a little booklet entitled *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* which the Abolitionists distributed in the quantity of three thousand copies. The parson even testified before the Privy Council at which occasion Pitt himself introduced this slave-captain turned preacher.

There was not a happier man than William Wilberforce when in 1807, just a few months before Newton's death, the abolition of the Slave Trade became law.

If Wilberforce's efforts to abolish slavery were the product of his conversion, the same may be said about his enthusiastic support of the charity school movement, his leadership among evangelicals, and his fight in the House

of Commons to put through resolutions for sending schoolmasters and chaplains to India. The Milners, Cecil, Venn, Scott, Thornton, and others may have influenced Wilberforce; but it was Newton who counseled with Wilberforce at the critical time, and encouraged and directed him along the path he was to take. What his conversion meant to the nation, world, and the spread of evangelical religion is much indeed. *It is in this light that it may be said that Newton played a significant part in changing the character of the life and thought of his century and the centuries to come.*

"I Like It Prodigiously"

In 1887 Hannah More, the famous playwright and poetess, went to hear John Newton preach at St. Mary's. After the sermon she "sat an hour with him, and came home with two pockets full of sermons. Following this interview, Newton sent Hannah More a brief letter and a copy of one of his Fast Day sermons. Mrs. More replied within a week's time, and thus began a correspondence and a strong friendship.

Early in the correspondence, Hannah More wrote Newton asking for spiritual advice. With this request the

door was opened to Newton to present his message more fully and to encourage her to use her talents for the spread of evangelical religion. "What you are pleased to say, my dear Madam," writes the London pastor, "of the state of your mind, I understand perfectly well. . . . I have stood upon that ground myself. I see what you yet want, to set you quite at ease, and though I cannot give it you, I trust that He who has already taught you what to desire, will do everything for you, and in you . . . but he must be waited *on*, and waited *for*, to do this; and for our encouragement it is written, as in golden letters over the gate of his mercy, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'" The Gospel message, continued Newton, tells us that we are all sinners, that we have departed from God, and have "lived to ourselves instead of devoting all our time, talents, and influence to his glory. As sinners, the first things we need are pardon, reconciliation, and a principle of life and conduct, entirely new."

This is the core of his message to Hannah More. He amplified it in following letters, discussing immortality, grace, sin, suffering, Christian conduct, Calvinism, God and Christ with special reference to God's love. What Newton did in his letters to Hannah More is typical of what he did in his letters to many another: he presented his theology, not all of it nor in a dry, boring sort of way, but geared to the needs of his correspondent. And how very well he really did drive home the logic of his message!

The kindly parson sent Hannah More some of his printed sermons and books. Her response to this gesture was most gratifying; "I should immediately have thanked you for your very acceptable present of books and pam-

phlets. . . . Your little book to your dissenting friend I opened the moment I came home, intending (for I was very busy) only to read a page or two: but I was so pleased with the candour, good sense, and Christian spirit of it, that I never laid it out of my hands while there was a page unread." But the one book of Newton's which made perhaps the greatest impact on Miss More was *Cardiphonia*. It was sent to her by Mrs. Boscawen in 1780, several years before Hannah More had even met John Newton. Hannah More writes Mrs. Boscawen that, "I am to thank you for 'Cardiphonia.' *I like it prodigiously*; it is full of vital, experimental religion. I thought I liked the three first letters best, but I have not read half the book. Who is the author? From his going a little out of his way to censure the Latin poets, I suspect he is of the calumniated school, though I have found nothing but rational and consistent piety."

Within two years Hannah More had discovered John Newton to be the author of *Cardiphonia*; she was delighted and challenged by the book: "there is . . . much vital religion, and much of the experience of a good Christian, who feels and laments his own imperfections, and weaknesses." She compares Newton's little devotional book of letters with Jortin's sermons in six volumes. "I have just finished six volumes of Jortin's sermons; elegant, but cold, and very low in doctrine—'plays round the head, but comes not to the heart.' *Cardiphonia* does; I like it much. . . ."

Hannah More's praise of Newton's book was significant. She had behind her a brilliant literary career. Her play *Percy* was a phenomenal success on the London stage,

and her poetry was read widely. She was a close friend of Garrick, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and knew Horace Walpole, Sheridan, Gibbon, Boswell, and many another of equal note, and she attended their social gatherings. After the death of David Garrick (1779), and after reading *Cardiphonia*, by degrees her interests shifted from the theatre and the literary world, to philanthropy and the religious world. What happened after reading *Cardiphonia*—going to hear Newton preach, the interview which followed, reading his letters, books, and sermons—had a bearing on her shift of interest.

What was the significance of Hannah More's change of interest? In what did it issue? For one thing, she became a leading social worker of her time, a fact best exemplified in her contribution to the education of poor and illiterate children. In 1796, after she had been working with the children for a number of years, she wrote Newton that she and her sister Patty serve "about sixteen or seventeen hundred" in their various schools and societies in "ten parishes." It was a "vital, experimental religion" which she taught her children. Besides her work in the schools, she conducted weekly Bible classes for the parents, and Newton sometimes spoke to her groups and occasionally he sent sermons designed to help her in her work.

Not unrelated to her efforts in the charity schools and with the adults, was Hannah More's publication of the "Cheap Repository Tracts." She knew that teaching the poor to read would be dangerous if they fell under the spell of such literature as that written by Tom Paine's disciples of skepticism. Therefore, she provided suitable reading material: ballads, allegories, and especially simple

stories with morals, such as "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain." Two million copies of the "Cheap Repository Tracts" were sold in the first year. It is significant that these tracts helped prepare the way for the establishment of the Religious Tract Society.

Hannah More also wrote for the educated. Her *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great* (1788), and *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World* (1790), made quite an impression on the upper classes. Miss More sent Newton her books, and he always replied with words of compliment and encouragement. It is interesting and perhaps significant that in an early letter to Hannah More, Newton said that "it is a singular privilege to have a *consecrated* pen, and to be able and willing to devote our talents to the cause of God and religion." Miss More caught the challenge of writing and influenced a great body of people for God.

Actually, Newton's protege William Wilberforce also wrote for the upper classes. He did a book called the *Practical View* which had a wide reading. Newton had the insight to see that Wilberforce and More could influence the "higher-ups" because of their position in society. These two really did do a great deal to popularize the Evangelical Movement among their associates. Bernard Martin has summed it up well when he says, "The changes wrought by the Wesleys, Whitefield, and the evangelicals amongst the common people were already thrusting upwards into polite society; but the movement was accelerated greatly by the writings of Hannah More and William Wilberforce, under the influence of John Newton."*

* Bernard Martin, *John Newton, A Biography*, p. 321.

"I Cannot Stop"

What was the secret of John Newton's success? Apparently he was no great pulpit orator, for his friend Richard Cecil says Newton lacked accuracy, his speech was not always clear, and his pulpit manner was ungraceful. But the fact remains that in his own day he was best known as an energetic and forceful preacher. Why? Because Newton had a "feel" for the kind of preaching that helped people. "Written sermons may be excellent in their own kind," he said once, "but a word warm from the preacher's heart, is more likely to warm the hearts of the hearers." "Be not cast down," he said in a letter to a young preacher, "if sometimes you fear you have been talking nonsense. . . . Perhaps that sermon may be the best you ever preached, I mean as to the effect. Some person, whom you little think of, may have received conviction or comfort. A *whole* sermon is seldom useful, a detached sentence usually does the business . . ."

Along with this warmhearted approach to preaching was Newton's practice of adapting his sermons to the needs of the people. In the "artless, simple talk" of the poor people of Olney, he says, "I saw more of the workings of the heart, the power of grace, and the devices of Satan, than any books could shew me." From the pulpit Newton taught his Olney people "chiefly by what I first learned from them in the course of the week, by visiting and conversing with them from house to house." He admits too that he was "greatly helped by meeting the children weekly. With them I was obliged to stoop in order to be understood; and I soon found that the familiar

style I was obliged to use to children, was the most proper to engage the attention of grown people: and I talk to the people in London much as I did to them at Olney."

His conversational mode of preaching, then, plus the fact that he addressed himself to the needs of his hearers, made him an effective preacher. He discussed men's temptations, perplexities, and troubles, and he made his points clear by the use of illustrations from life. The result was that when he preached, to use the words of one who heard him, he "always had . . . the entire possession of the ear of his congregation." Newton's sermons really provided help for the people and encouragement too. This is exemplified in the case of Elizabeth Gurney, who, during a period of spiritual confusion, went to hear Newton preach. She reported, "I . . . heard a most touching sermon. I never can forget the enjoyment and encouragement of that evening, and the delight of the whole church service on that occasion. It was what I wanted."

Not only was Newton an intriguing preacher, he had such other factors in his favor as his fascinating personal history, his endless energy, creative techniques for attracting people, his breadth of spirit, his first-hand knowledge of sin and salvation, his work with individuals. As to his *personal history*, people wanted to see this curious little man who had led such a remarkably adventurous life in his seafaring days. The "African blasphemer," as he often styled himself, had been converted to Christianity, and was making an astonishing impact by his sermons, letters, and hymns. The novelty of this man never wore off. Then too, Newton was an exceptionally *energetic person*. He often preached a dozen or more times a week, and

Bernard Martin ventures to say that "During his ministry he may have entered the pulpit ten thousand times." Besides his many preaching engagements, he was continually writing letters, preparing materials for the press, visiting his parishioners, meeting people individually and in groups, and participating in countless other activities. Even after the turn of the century, when Newton was an old man, he continued to work and preach, and though he was less active now he was highly respected and listened to with keen interest.

As to the *creative techniques* Newton used to get people out to church, one of the most interesting was the sermon series on the Messiah which he presented near the time of the Handel Festival of 1784. The festival aroused general enthusiasm and Newton capitalized on the situation by doing this series of sermons. This series attracted many people. But the *breadth of spirit* in this kindly little man was far more important than any mere technique. He was a stranger to bigotry, narrowness, sectarianism, and because he refused publicly to criticize other denominations, his appeal was much wider than that of the average eighteenth century preacher.

Who can doubt that John Newton had unusual insight into the nature of *sin and salvation*? He could appeal to his listeners on the basis that God intervened personally in the affairs of men, and that Christ was man's hope, because he himself knew from personal experience the meaning of deliverance from sin through Christ. But Newton's preaching alone might never have resulted in the conversion of his parishioners and such people as Scott, Buchanan, and Wilberforce. He had the knack of *working with individ-*

uals, following up his preaching with counseling, letters, books and small group meetings. It was actually this combination of preaching with follow-up work which drove home his message. In his preaching and work with individuals, John Newton never lost sight of his goal which was the driving force of his ministry. "He possessed great determination of purpose, with singular earnestness, diligence, and perseverance in all he undertook," and he witnessed to a remarkable degree the accomplishment of this aim which was the moral and spiritual reformation of his people.

In his old age Newton grew blind and deaf, and sometimes his memory failed, but he never failed to take advantage of an opportunity to fulfill his aim. When he was past eighty and quite feeble, Richard Cecil said to him, "In the article of public preaching, might it not be best to consider your work as done, and stop before you evidently discover you can speak no longer?" The old man's reply is now famous: "*I cannot stop. What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?*" John Newton preached his last sermon in October, 1806; the sermon was for the benefit of the sufferers from the Battle of Trafalgar.

He died on December 21, 1807, at eighty-three years of age, and was buried at St. Mary Woolnoth's, where he had given faithful service for twenty-eight years. On January 24, 1893, the remains of John Newton and his wife were removed from London to Olney, but to this day may be seen in the Church of St. Mary's, Newton's epitaph, which he composed himself, inscribed on a plain marble tablet. It is really a summary of his amazing life.

JOHN NEWTON

Clerk,

Once an infidel and Libertine
A Servant of Slaves in Africa,

was,

By the Rich Mercy of our Lord and Saviour,
Jesus Christ

Preserved, Restored, Pardoned,
And Appointed to Preach the Faith
He had Long Laboured to Destroy.

He Ministered
Near XVI Years as Curate and Vicar
of Olney in Bucks,
And XXVIII as Rector
of These United Parishes.

On February the First MDCCL, He Married
Mary,
Daughter of the Late George Catlett,
of Chatham, Kent,
Whom he Resigned
To the Lord who Gave Her,
On December the XVth, MDCCXC.

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